

# Rise and Shine: It's Breakfast Time!



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Most of us already know that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Beginning your day without breakfast is like trying to fly a kite without any wind. It's hard to get started and even harder to keep going. Breakfast is the first chance your child's developing body and brain has to refuel its glucose levels, (that's the brain's basic fuel), after several hours of sleep.

**Why is breakfast the most important meal of the day? Here are just a few reasons why your child should eat breakfast:**

- Studies show that eating breakfast everyday is important in maintaining a healthy body weight. Starting your child's day with a healthy breakfast will also make them less likely to eat high-calorie snacks during the morning.
- Eating a well balanced breakfast improves their intake of fiber, vitamins and minerals, especially iron and vitamin C; these nutrients are essential in a balanced diet. In fact, a good breakfast provides one-fourth to one-third of the day's energy and nutrient needs.
- Children who eat a healthy breakfast tend to show improved academic performance, longer attention span, better attendance and decreased hyperactivity in school.
- Skipping breakfast will often make your child feel tired, restless or irritable by mid-morning. By eating breakfast, your child will have energy throughout the morning and help him/her concentrate better in class. This also means fewer trips to the school nurse's office.

Breakfast can be served hot or cold, sitting down or eaten on-the-run. Breakfast can be a typical breakfast food, or left-overs from dinner the night before. The main point to remember is to include it in your morning routine for both you and your child. A good breakfast is easier than you think. By choosing the right foods, you can feed your child quickly at home or create a brown bag to go.

**A nutritious breakfast includes foods from at least three of the five food groups:**

- Fruit group; fresh whole fruit such as bananas, apples, oranges. Sliced fruit which can be added to cereal, yogurt or oatmeal.
- Vegetables group; 100% vegetable juice, or mushrooms, asparagus, or green peppers in an omelet.
- Grains group; whole-grain breads, dry cereal, bagels, english muffins, flour tortillas, rice.
- Milk group; low fat or fat free milk, yogurt or cheese. If your child is lactose intolerant, choose lactose-free products that still have the calcium and other nutrients needed.
- Meat and beans group; eggs, lean meat, peanut butter, beans.

### **Traditional and non-traditional breakfast ideas:**

- Whole grain cereal with fruit and low fat milk
- Oatmeal with raisins and low fat milk
- Waffles, turkey bacon and fruit juice
- Bagel with cheese or peanut butter
- Breakfast burrito: scrambled eggs, cheese and veggies wrapped in a flour tortilla
- Grilled cheese sandwich and juice
- Turkey sandwich and a cup of low fat milk
- Rice bowl with chicken and vegetables on top

### **Follow these easy tips to make time for breakfast in the morning:**

- Do some of your morning chores the night before, such as selecting clothes to wear and getting backpacks ready for school.
- Set the alarm for 15 minutes earlier to allow more time to prepare and eat breakfast as a family.
- Skip the audio-video temptation: make breakfast time about eating rather than watching TV, playing a video game or using the computer. You may find it easier to get out of the house on time as well.
- Offer something non-traditional like leftovers from the night before. Eating nutritious food for breakfast is better than eating no breakfast at all.
- Have items available in your kitchen that can be quickly and easily assembled in the morning such as whole grain cereals with milk, fresh fruit, yogurt or bagels.
- Pick one morning a week where you make a special breakfast such as pancakes and eggs. You can set up the mix the night before or even make the pancakes and freeze them to reheat when needed.

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**Many Mississippi schools now offer breakfast before school begins. Please check with your local school about this possibility and the healthy food options that are offered.**