

## Eat Breakfast and Start the Day Off On the Right Foot

“Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.” We have all heard that saying many times yet it is the meal that is most frequently omitted in the diets of Americans. As adults, we often use excuses such as not having enough time or not being hungry in the morning to explain not eating breakfast. My question is this: If adults fall into the breakfast-skipping habit so easily, what example are we setting for our children?

Research shows that students who start the day off with a nutritious breakfast do better in school. This important meal provides the nutrients and energy children necessary to be able to concentrate in the classroom. Students who eat breakfast daily get better grades, pay more attention in class and exhibit better behavior than students who routinely skip breakfast. In a world where childhood obesity is now an epidemic, breakfast eaters also tend to have better weight control.

To start your student off on the right foot each morning, make sure to plan breakfast time into your routine. By setting the alarm 10-15 minutes earlier than usual, you can give your child enough time to consume a nutrient-rich breakfast. Did you know that all of our local public schools offer breakfast daily? You can be sure that, at school, there are several healthy breakfast items offered each day for your child to choose from. If eating at home is an option, make sure to offer a mix of protein foods and carbohydrates to maximize satiety. Some good combinations are whole wheat toast with peanut butter, an egg sandwich on a whole grain English muffin, or fruit with low fat yogurt or cottage cheese. Smoothies that contain low fat yogurt or tofu blended with milk and fruit make a great on-the-go breakfast.

Over time, as students get older, they tend to eat breakfast less frequently. Therefore, while it is important to instill good habits in the younger population, we shouldn't take our eye off middle school and high school students. For these older students, more school work and extracurricular activities often take precedence over good dietary habits. To ensure that they are getting a healthy breakfast, have healthy ready-to-go foods on hand that they can grab on the run. Foods such as high fiber breakfast bars, drinkable yogurt smoothies, fruit, and string cheese make great portable breakfasts.

Remember, one of the best ways to help your child to develop a habit is to model that habit. If you want your child to start their morning off right, eat breakfast yourself!

