

You may have heard the adage that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. But have you heard that skipping breakfast may put you on the fast track to weight gain, heart disease and diabetes? This was revealed in a 2005 study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Women who ate a breakfast of whole grain cereal and milk followed by a midmorning snack ate 100 fewer calories each day than the group of women not eating breakfast or a snack. (Eating 100 less calories per day for a year may result in a 10 pound weight loss!) The women who ate breakfast also had a better insulin response to eating. Their total and LDL “bad” cholesterol levels were found to be significantly lower in the group of women who ate breakfast. Eating breakfast was also one of the four weight maintenance strategies noted by individuals in the National Weight Control Registry (4500 people who have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for a minimum of a year).

The importance of eating breakfast is to refuel our body after fasting for 6-12 hours. Eating in the morning provides nourishment and energy and helps promote sharper skills and concentration. (Yes, breakfast can boost your brain power!) By eating first thing in the morning, you give your hungry body the chance to replenish blood sugar levels, burn calories effectively and maintain more consistent energy all day long. Ideally, breakfast would contain a good source of protein and at least one quarter of your calories for the day. Another idea is saving part of your breakfast for a mid-morning snack. Recent studies have shown eating every 3-5 hours keeps the body’s blood glucose levels more stable and fends off cravings and binges. Bring in a piece of fruit for mid-morning or stash your desk drawer with some healthy options such as nuts, dried fruit or whole grain crackers. (However, don’t eat from the drawer...measure out a reasonable size portion for your morning snack!)

In choosing a whole grain cold cereal, make sure the first ingredient on the list of ingredients on the label contains the word “whole”. Cereals must contain 2 or more grams of fiber per serving to meet the standards of the Whole Grains Council (however, try to find one that offers 3-5 grams of fiber per serving!) Whole wheat and oats naturally have more fiber than brown rice.

The major reason for skipping breakfast is “not enough time”. Below are some suggestions for quick breakfasts (some can even be consumed on the go!) Think “out of the box” as breakfast does not have to include traditional breakfast foods!

- One slice leftover cheese or veggie pizza and a piece of fruit
- Peanut butter and a banana on whole grain bread or rolled into a tortilla (try a whole wheat one!) and low fat yogurt or milk
- Café Latte made with one cup skim milk, a low fat granola bar, and a piece of fruit
- A turkey sandwich and piece of fruit and a glass of 1% or nonfat milk
- Low fat yogurt (also available in a tube!), a Quaker breakfast square, and a piece of fruit
- String cheese, a few whole grain crackers (such as Triscuits) and a piece of fruit
- Peanut butter on whole grain toast and a piece of fruit and/or glass of 1% or nonfat milk
- Scrambled eggs or egg substitute and salsa in a tortilla and a glass of milk or yogurt

How about whipping up a smoothie in your blender? Try this quick and tasty fruity drink from the American Institute for Cancer Research (check out their website at www.aicr.org for more healthy recipes)

Berry Banana Smoothie

(Makes 2 servings, one cup each)

- 1 cup fresh or frozen berries (mixture of berries of your choice)
- 1 medium banana
- 2/3 cup juice or nonfat milk or yogurt
- 2-3 ice cubes (if not using frozen fruit)

Combine all ingredients in blender and puree until smooth. You can increase berries to 1 and 1/2 cups and use just half a banana if you want more berry flavor. Other fruits can also be substituted to change the flavor.

Per serving=131 calories, less than 1 g total fat (if made with nonfat milk or yogurt), 4 g dietary fiber

Another quick breakfast suggestion is a high fiber muffin using fresh blueberries that you can prepare ahead and pull from your freezer.

Serving one of these muffins with low fat or nonfat milk or yogurt would make a quick and healthy breakfast or snack!

Low Fat Blueberry Bran Muffins

(Makes 12 muffins)

1 and 1/2 cups wheat or oat bran (not bran cereal but actual bran)
1 cup nonfat milk
1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
1 egg or 2 egg whites
3/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 cup all purpose flour
1/2 cup whole wheat flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup blueberries

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Grease muffin cups or use paper muffin liners. Mix together wheat bran and milk and let stand for 10 minutes. In large bowl, mix together applesauce, egg, brown sugar, and vanilla. Beat in bran mixture. Mix together flour, whole wheat flour, baking soda and powder, and salt. Stir into bran mixture just until moistened. Fold in blueberries. Scoop batter into muffin cups. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until tops spring back when lightly touched.

Per muffin= 123 calories, 1 g fat, 4 g protein, 5 g fiber, 19 mg cholesterol

So “**start your day in a healthy way**”! It can make a difference in how you feel throughout the day as well as contributing to your overall health. If you want to discuss more breakfast ideas or have any other nutrition questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me! Remember each ISU employee who works at least one third time or more is eligible for 3 Nutrition Clinic appointments each calendar year **at no cost to you** (it's part of your employee benefits!)

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