

Blueprints for Change

READY, SET, GO ... FOR BREAKFAST

Breakfast is the most important yet the most often skipped meal of the day. Why is it so important? Well just imagine that you're a car. After you've been sleeping for seven or eight (hopefully!) hours, your gas tank is empty. Breakfast gives you the fuel to hit the road!

It recharges your brain, speeds up your metabolism after a night of fasting and reduces feelings of stress. Breakfast replenishes your body's supply of glucose (the brain's fuel) and provides essential nutrients to maintain energy levels during the day. If you eat your evening meal at around 8 pm and skip breakfast, your body is going a very long time without readily available energy.

Many studies have shown that eating breakfast improves concentration, problem solving ability, mental performance, memory, and mood. If you have an important meeting or class in the morning you will certainly be at a disadvantage if the others have eaten breakfast and you've gone without. On average, they will think faster and clearer, and will have better recall than you.

One of the myths many people buy into is that that skipping breakfast may help them lose weight. Not true! Skipping breakfast frequently leads to later-in-the-day bingeing. That "growling" stomach hunger may lead to a lack of control and distorted signals of having eaten enough. Consequently, you take in more calories than if you had eaten breakfast. In fact, it's easier to control one's weight by eating smaller meals and snacks (healthy ones, that is) more frequently.

If a piece of fresh fruit and a cereal bar are all that you have time for in the early morning hours then by all means, have those or take them with you! **Anything** is better than **nothing**, although the healthier choices you make, the better you will feel. Eating fruit or a healthy cereal bar "on the go" is preferable to not eating until late morning, when you may suddenly be starving and the only thing available is a muffin or donut.

GOOD BREAKFAST CHOICES ARE THOSE WITH A LOW GLYCEMIC INDEX.

The glycemic index of foods is a ranking based on their immediate effect on blood sugar levels. Carbohydrate foods that break down quickly when digested have the highest glycemic indexes. Their blood sugar response is high and fast. Carbohydrates that break down slowly, gradually releasing glucose into the blood stream, have a low Glycemic Index.

GOOD BREAKFAST CHOICES ARE BALANCED ONES.

Aim to cover the three food groups – protein (helps you feel full longer which is important for muscle and cell maintenance), low glycemic carbohydrates and healthy fats. Include fiber which slows down the release of carbohydrates from the stomach for a more sustained release of sugar into the bloodstream over a longer time period to avoid sugar highs and lows.

GOOD BREAKFAST CHOICES ARE HEALTHY ONES

Choose foods/products that have no hydrogenated fats added, a minimal amount of sugar, no toxic additives such as aspartame, MSG or food dyes and are as close to Mother Nature as possible i.e. unprocessed.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN BREAKFAST CHOICES:

Low Glycemic Breakfast Cereals

- Look for cereals that contain high-fiber grains, such as barley, buckwheat, millet, oats, rye, and whole wheat. Avoid white rice cereals, since rice is low in fiber.
- Choose cereals with a high fiber and low sugar content. The total carbohydrate-to-sugar ratio should be at least four to one, meaning that if "total carbohydrates" equal 24 grams, the "sugars" should have a value of 6 grams or less. This means that most of the carbs come from the grain and fibers,

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not from the added sugars. On the other hand, a cereal with 29 grams of total carbohydrates and 16 grams of sugars falls into the "junk cereal" category. The most nutritious cereals have a carb-to-sugar ratio of six or seven to one (e.g., 23 grams to 3 grams).

Another way to evaluate the amount of sugar in a cereal is to look at the number of grams of sugar per one ounce serving. As a general guide, more than seven grams of sugar (1.5 teaspoons) per one ounce serving is too much.

Put even more simply, look for cereals that have 6 or more grams of fiber and less than 10 grams of sugar (All-Bran, Bran Buds, Oat Bran).

Rolled Oats

- Choose old-fashioned oats/ long-cooking oats (or preferably steel-cut) and soak them overnight with a little whey, lemon juice or vinegar to neutralize the phytic acid. The overnight soaking also means that they take only five to ten minutes to cook in the morning.
- Oats are a good source of soluble fiber, B vitamins, vitamin E, iron and zinc. Cooking them in milk supplies calcium and lowers the glycemic index while adding a few raisins supplies natural sweetness.

Eggs

- Organic
- Lecithin in the yolk is important for cognitive function and mood elevation.
- Avoid powdered eggs. Due to the influence of heat in the process, the cholesterol is oxidized forming free radicals and possibly damaging tissue cells, increasing the risk of cancer or causing a change in genes.

Bacon, Sausages

- Choose those with no added nitrites and nitrates. Nitrites are used for preservation and have questionable safety issues.

Fruit

- A great source of vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytonutrients, as well as active enzymes.
- Fruits such as apples, pears, blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, apricots, cherries, grapefruit, oranges, peaches, plums have a lower Glycemic Index than the tropical fruits such as pineapple, papayas, mango. Very ripe bananas have a higher Glycemic Index than those that are barely ripe.

"Grainy" Breads made with whole seeds of barley, rye, oats, wheat.

- Look for breads where the first ingredient is "Sprouted Grain", "100% Stone Ground Whole Wheat", "100% Whole Grain" or Pumpernickel. Breads should have at least 3 grams of fiber.
- Sourdough has a lower Glycemic Index than regular white bread.

Dairy

- Plain yogurt with fresh sliced fruit or ½ cup cottage cheese with fresh fruit.
- Cheese melted on whole grain pumpernickel.
- Avoid powdered milk. Due to the influence of heat in the process, oxidation occurs and free radicals are formed.

Nut Butters

Choose organic nut butters without hydrogenated fats or added sugars.

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Pancakes, Waffles

- Made with whole grain flour.
- Served with small amount of pure maple syrup, not artificially-flavored sugar syrup

(See Recipe at the end of this article)

Some examples of energizing breakfast meals include:

- 2 pieces of sprouted grain toast (complex carbohydrate), 2 T of peanut butter (protein and fat), and 1 medium banana (fruit)
- ½ sprouted wheat bagel (complex carbohydrate), 1 T of cream cheese (fat), 2 ounces of smoked salmon (protein), and ½ cup of sliced tomatoes (vegetable)
- 1 cup of cooked oatmeal (complex carbohydrate) made with 1 cup of 2 percent fat milk (protein, fat), and ¼ cup of raisins (fruit)
- 1 small muffin (complex carbohydrate and fat), 1 cup of plain low fat yogurt (protein), ½ cup blueberries (fruit)
- 1 cup Bran Buds (complex carbohydrate) with 1 cup 2 percent fat milk (protein, fat), topped with unsweetened canned pear slices (fruit).

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### ***Buttermilk Pancakes with Fruit*** (makes 10 small pancakes)

(From "The Glucose Revolution: An Authoritative Guide to the Glycemic Index" by Jennie Brand-Miller et al.)

A light pancake with a lower Glycemic Index than the average pancake.

- 1 cup (3 oz) unprocessed oat bran or 1-minute oats
- 2 cups (16 oz) buttermilk
- ½ cup (2¾ oz) dried fruit, chopped
- ½ cup (2¾ oz) unbleached, all purpose flour, sifted
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons butter, melted

1. Combine oats and buttermilk in a bowl and let stand for 10 minutes.
2. Stir in the dried fruit, flour, sugar, baking soda. Add egg and butter; mix thoroughly.
3. Heat a non-stick frying pan and grease lightly with butter or spray with cooking spray. Pout in about 3 tablespoons of batter, cook over moderate-high heat until bubbly on top and lightly browned underneath. Turn to brown on other side. Repeat with remaining batter.

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