



---

**Original Article:** <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/nutrition.html>

---

## Healthy breakfast: The best way to begin your day

It might be the last thing on your morning to-do list, or it might not be on your list at all. But a healthy breakfast refuels your body and jump-starts your day. So don't overlook this important meal. Select healthy options that fit your taste and lifestyle, and put breakfast back into your morning.

### The benefits of a healthy breakfast

Breakfast not only starts your day off right, but also lays the foundation for lifelong health benefits. People who eat a healthy breakfast are more likely to:

- Consume more vitamins and minerals and less fat and cholesterol
- Have better concentration and productivity throughout the morning
- Control their weight
- Have lower cholesterol, which reduces the risk of heart disease

Breakfast is especially important for children and adolescents. According to the American Dietetic Association, children who eat a healthy breakfast are more likely to have better concentration, problem-solving skills and eye-hand coordination. They may also be more alert, creative and less likely to miss days of school.

### Best bets for a healthy breakfast

A healthy breakfast should consist of a variety of foods, for example, whole grains, low-fat protein or dairy sources, and fruit. This provides complex carbohydrates, protein and a small amount of fat — a combination that delays hunger symptoms for hours.

Whether you opt for traditional options, such as yogurt, whole-grain muffins or ready-to-eat cereal, or less typical foods, such as leftover vegetable pizza or a fruit smoothie, you can get the nutrients and energy you need to start your day.

## Traditional fare offers many options

To make a healthy breakfast each day, choose one item from at least three of the following four food groups:

- **Fruits and vegetables.** Fresh fruits and vegetables, 100 percent juice without added sugar
- **Grains.** Whole-grain rolls, bagels, hot or cold whole-grain cereals, low-fat bran muffins, crackers, or melba toast
- **Dairy.** Skim milk, low-fat yogurt cups or low-fat cheeses, such as cottage and natural cheeses
- **Protein.** Hard-boiled eggs, peanut butter, lean slices of meat and poultry, or fish, such as water-packed tuna or slices of salmon

For a healthy breakfast on the go, munch dry, ready-to-eat cereal with a banana and drink a small carton of low-fat or skim milk. The best cereals are those that are higher in fiber. If counting calories, choose cereals that are lower in calories.

Cereal, 1-cup serving	Fiber, in grams	Calories
All-Bran Bran Buds	39	225
Fiber One	28	120
All-Bran Original	18	161
Raisin Bran	7	195
Spoon Size Shredded Wheat	6	167
Wheat Chex	5	180
Cheerios	3	110
Wheaties	3	106
Basic 4	3	210

Source: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, 2006

Oatmeal is another good choice, but it may be a challenge if you're on the run or at work. One cup of plain, cooked oatmeal has about 4 grams of fiber and 130 calories. And don't forget eggs, including hard-boiled eggs, which are easy to take with you. The yolk does contain cholesterol, but eggs are full of nutrients, including protein, vitamins A and B-12, folic acid, and phosphorus.

## Nontraditional fare counts, too

If you dislike regular breakfast foods, try something different, such as:

- Leftover vegetable pizza
- Fresh fruit topped with low-fat yogurt and crispy whole-grain cereal
- Vegetables, salsa and low-fat shredded cheeses wrapped in a tortilla
- A smoothie blended from exotic fruits, some low-fat yogurt and a spoonful of wheat germ
- Whole-wheat crackers with low-fat cheese
- A microwaved potato topped with broccoli and grated Parmesan cheese

Think low-fat and fresh lean meats or even fish, low-fat milk products, fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. The combinations are limited only by your imagination and taste.

### **Eating out can be healthy**

You can even make healthy breakfast choices at fast-food restaurants. Whole-grain bagels, rolls and English muffins are better for you than fat-filled doughnuts, scones, croissants or biscuits. Skip the oversized breakfast sandwiches, bacon, sausage and whole milk.

### **Working in your morning meal**

If your excuse for missing breakfast is lack of time, figure out what you'll eat the night before and get up 10 minutes earlier to enjoy it. Or pack something to take with you.

Think you're saving calories by skipping breakfast? Chances are you'll be ravenous by lunchtime, which may lead you to eat more. Or your hunger at midmorning may tempt you to indulge in a high-fat treat that someone brought to the office.

Your morning meal doesn't have to mean loading up on sugar, fat and cholesterol. Making nutritious breakfast choices can set you up for healthier eating all day long.

---

[By Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

Feb 14, 2007

© 1998-2008 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). All rights reserved. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for noncommercial personal use only. "Mayo," "Mayo Clinic," "MayoClinic.com," "EmbodyHealth," "Reliable tools for healthier lives," "Enhance your life," and the triple-shield Mayo Clinic logo are trademarks of Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.

NU00197