

DON'T SKIP BREAKFAST TO CUT CALORIES

When you're trying to lose weight, cutting out breakfast may be tempting. You figure you're saving yourself some calories and you get a couple extra minutes to snooze. But research has consistently shown that the people who successfully lose weight are the ones that wake up and eat! Furthermore, people who eat breakfast regularly have better vitamin and mineral status and eat fewer calories from fat. So it seems that breakfast really is the most important meal of the day.

Eat Early, Weigh Less Later

Why does eating breakfast help people lose weight? It defies common sense that eating all those calories in the morning instead of simply skipping them would help.

Many studies, in both adults and children, have shown that breakfast eaters tend to weigh less than breakfast skippers.

Why? One theory suggests that eating a healthy breakfast can reduce hunger throughout the day and help people make better food choices at other meals. While it might seem as though you could save calories by skipping breakfast, this is not an effective strategy. Typically, hunger gets the best of people who skip breakfast, and they eat more at lunch and throughout the day.

Another theory behind the breakfast-weight control link implies that eating breakfast is part of a healthy lifestyle that includes making wise food choices and balancing calories with exercise. For example, consider the successful weight losers followed by the National Weight Control Registry, all of whom have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for at least one year. Some 80% of the people in the Registry regularly eat breakfast (and also follow a calorie-controlled, low-fat diet).

It's worth noting that most studies linking breakfast to weight control looked at a healthy breakfast containing protein and/or whole grains—not meals loaded with fat and calories.

Eating breakfast also gives you energy to do more physical activity and be more productive in everything you do, which is also vital to weight control. So make the effort to get up in the morning and fix yourself a healthy meal.

Maintaining Your Diet

Before you get too excited and go out for a Denny's™ Grand Slam Breakfast, keep in mind that your breakfast should consist of healthy items that are in line with your current dietary weight-loss goals. Members of the National



Weight Control Registry report eating cereal and fruit for breakfast. While these are certainly healthy options, eggs have also been shown to offer several benefits.

Eggs have a greater satiety value than cereal and white bread. This means that they are more satisfying in giving you that feeling of fullness, while you may actually be eating less. One of the reasons for this is that eggs are high in protein, which is known to increase satiety. Proteins also have a higher thermic effect, meaning that it takes more calories to digest them. Studies have compared an egg breakfast to a bagel breakfast of the same caloric value and weight. Researchers at Louisiana State University's Pennington Biomedical Research Center discovered that people who ate the eggs for breakfast ate less at lunch and less throughout the rest of the day compared to people who ate the bagels, even though they had the same amount of calories for breakfast.

In the past, eggs have had a bad rap because of their high cholesterol content. However, eggs today have lower cholesterol counts than in the past due to the healthier feeds given to

chickens. Additionally, research has shown that moderate egg consumption of about 1 per day does not increase the risk of coronary heart disease in healthy individuals. If the cholesterol count is a concern, then egg whites, which are free of cholesterol yet rich in protein, are a good alternative. Eggs are also a good source of essential nutrients riboflavin, vitamin B12, phosphorus, selenium and protein.

If you aren't too keen on eggs, try low-fat or non-fat dairy products like yogurt, which are also high in protein. High-fiber complex carbohydrates like whole-grain breads and cereals will keep you satisfied. Fiber also increases that sensation of fullness. Overall, whether you choose eggs, cereal or fruit, your breakfast should fall in line with your dietary weight-loss goals. Choose foods that fit your lifestyle and that you will enjoy.

Additional Resources

National Weight Control Registry:

www.nwcr.ws

Weight Control Information Network—

Weight-loss and Nutrition Myths: www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/myths.htm

If you are interested in information on other health and fitness topics, contact: American Council on Exercise, 4851 Paramount Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, 800-825-3636; or, go online at www.acefitness.org and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts™



©2009 American Council on Exercise®

Reprinted with permission from the American Council on Exercise®