

Training Table

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Breaking Ground With Breakfast

Do you ever feel that breakfast is the last thing on your mind when you first wake up? With research showing the benefits of increased mental alertness, lower weight, improved lifestyles and enhanced health for breakfast eaters, you may never wake up on the same side of the bed again.

What is breakfast anyway?

Break it down—breakfast is “break” and “fast.” That means that just when you wake up, it is the perfect time to break the fast you experienced when you were sleeping. While your body is sleeping, your internal organs are still working, performing involuntary reactions and using fuel for energy. After a good night’s sleep, the levels of glycogen stored in your liver are almost depleted by half. That means that if you start exercising or simply start your day without refueling, you will begin in a depleted or disadvantaged state.

Benefits of Breakfast

1. Breakfast can improve your overall health.

Research shows that individuals who consume breakfast cereal every day report better mental and physical health than those who consume breakfast less frequently⁴.

In addition, individuals who consume breakfast regularly have a healthier lifestyle than non-breakfast eaters. Breakfasters are less likely to be smokers, drink less alcohol, and have a healthier diet⁵.

2. Breakfast can keep you alert.

Breakfast, particularly one that is high in fiber and low in fat, is associated with a higher post-breakfast alertness, which can last all the way to lunch. Studies show that the high fiber/low fat breakfast is more effective than a low fiber/carbohydrate breakfast, a high fiber/high fat breakfast, or a low fiber/high fat breakfast⁵.

3. Breakfast can help you emotionally.

Research shows that individuals who consume a cereal breakfast each day are less depressed, less emotionally distressed, and have lower levels of perceived stress than those who do not eat breakfast each day⁵.

4. Breakfast can enhance your mental performance.

Breakfast enhances one’s ability to handle tasks requiring aspects of memory, such as word list recall and memory while counting backwards¹. Now, can you remember all that?

5. The right breakfast can help you manage your weight.

While many of us might skip breakfast, hoping to decrease our daily caloric intake, research shows that individuals who consume a high fiber cereal consume fewer calories at lunch².

Furthermore, in one study, subjects classified as dissatisfied with their weight and who dieted reported skipping breakfast more frequently than non-dieters⁶.

6. Breakfast can enhance the overall quality of your diet.

Breakfast can set you on the right path for the day. Research shows that individuals who ate ready-to-eat cereal at breakfast between 4 and 7 times during the week consumed significantly less fat and cholesterol and significantly more fiber, carbohydrate, protein, thiamin, niacin, riboflavin, vitamins B6, B12, and A, iron, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, copper, and zinc than those who had no cereal at breakfast³.

Putting it all Together:

Try any of these high fiber, high carbohydrate, low fat breakfasts.

Table 1. Sample breakfast with total calories, fat, protein, and fiber.

1 hard-boiled egg, 1 slice whole-wheat toast,
1 Tbsp jam/jelly, ½ grapefruit, ½ cup non fat yogurt

297 calories, 7 grams of fat, 16 grams of protein,
4 grams of fiber

Table 2. Sample breakfast with total calories, fat, protein, and fiber.

½ whole-wheat bagel, 2 t light cream cheese,
1 cup non fat yogurt, 1 cup blueberries

453 calories, 3 grams of fat, 16 grams of protein,
6 grams of fiber

Table 3. Sample breakfast with total calories, fat, protein, and fiber.

1 cup high fiber cereal (i.e. Shredded Wheat, Grape Nuts or Kashi), ½ banana, 8 oz low fat milk, 1 orange

360 calories, 4 grams of fat, 14 grams of protein,
7 grams of fiber

Table 4. Sample breakfast with total calories, fat, protein, and fiber.

1 serving oatmeal, 8 oz low fat milk, 1 orange

268 calories, 6 grams of fat, 12 grams of protein,
5 grams of fiber

Compare With These Quick Breakfasts:

Table 1. Breakfast Choices to Avoid

Sample Meals	Calories	Percent calories from Fat
Croissants	250 – 300	45 – 55%
Danish	400	45%
Donut (plain) —(cake-type)	260	60%
Donut (chocolate frosted) —(yeast-type)	200	45%
Muffins (4½ oz) —Fast food or bakery type	300 – 350	30 – 35%
Sweet Roll	250	40%
Cheese omelet (4 oz)	300	80%
Sausage (3 oz)	270	75%
Bacon (3 medium pieces)	109	77%

With all of the research supporting the claim that “breakfast is the most important meal of the day,” setting your alarm clock 10 minutes early hardly seems like an inconvenience anymore. Include breakfast as a core part of your daily routine.

About the Author

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