



# Eat Breakfast Daily

**CHALLENGE**  
Eat a healthy  
breakfast  
daily.

## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. On your monthly **Health Challenge™ Calendar**, record the number of days you eat breakfast.
2. Read “Why eat breakfast” on this page.
3. To complete the Challenge, eat a healthy breakfast at least 22 days this month.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

## Typical American breakfasts

A century ago, American farmers and city-dwellers alike piled breakfast plates high with meat, potatoes, gravy, eggs, bread, and sometimes pastries. Not much has changed.

A 21st century leisurely breakfast often consists of sausage or bacon, eggs, fried potatoes, gravy, and waffles or pancakes smothered in butter and syrup or topped with sweetened fruit compote and whipped cream.

This breakfast is high in saturated fat and low in vitamins and other important nutrients. People who engage in regular hard work similar to our ancestors, like the Amish, might get away with eating that diet, but the rest of America is at increased risk of obesity and chronic diseases, such as cancer and diabetes.

Another typical breakfast hurriedly gobbled down before children and adults rush out the door is a bowl of sugar-coated cereal. An alternate version is a pastry and a cup of coffee. These foods are highly processed and high in sugar. They fill the void and give you a quick flash of energy, but the effect is short lived. By mid-morning, you're tired and hungry. Not only are you consuming empty calories, but you're also increasing your risk of diabetes and obesity.

## Why eat breakfast?

Either because of time constraints or the desire to lose weight, at least 17% of Americans regularly skip the morning meal. But to meet the demands of a busy day, your body and mind need the required nutrients and energy a well-balanced breakfast provides.

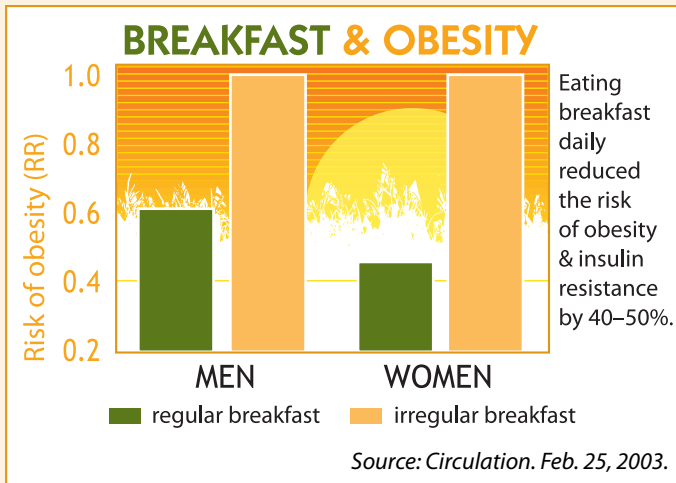
People who do not eat a healthy breakfast experience a “let down” or low energy levels later in the morning.

### Skipping breakfast leads to:

- Impaired ability to think and concentrate.
- Decreased ability to learn.
- Increased stress hormones, irritability and emotional arousal (how calm do you feel when you're very hungry?), and a higher accident rate.
- Increased obesity. When comparing breakfast eaters to breakfast skippers, studies show that breakfast skippers have a greater tendency to be overweight.
- Feeling tired with decreased physical performance (food provides energy for both physical and mental work).
- Large population studies show that those who eat breakfast daily live longer than those who tend to skip breakfast.

Eating regular meals – especially breakfast – every day is a good health habit. Breakfast kick-starts your metabolism, provides fuel for your mind, and cuts down on mid morning snacking. Most snack foods are high in calories, fat, sugar, and salt, and low in nutrients. This is probably one reason why breakfast skippers tend to weigh more.





## Healthy breakfast eaters are thinner, healthier

Eating a healthy breakfast has beneficial effects on appetite, insulin in the blood, and energy metabolism. An 8-year study of 2,059 men and women (part of the CARDIA study) looked at breakfast habits and risk of developing obesity or insulin resistance syndrome (a precursor to diabetes).

Over the 8 years, white men who ate breakfast daily were 39% less likely to become obese, and 37% less likely to develop insulin resistance syndrome compared to those who didn't eat breakfast regularly. White women were 55% less likely to become obese and 53% less likely to develop insulin resistance syndrome if they ate breakfast daily. These amazing reductions in risk of obesity and insulin resistance include adjusting for exercise patterns, smoking, alcohol use, and demographic data.

Several studies have found similar benefits. One study reports that missing breakfast was associated with a fourfold increase in the risk of obesity.

Researchers who monitored the 3,000 participants in the National Weight Control Registry (NHCR) discovered that nearly 80% of them ate breakfast every day as part of their routine to stay slender. Of those who ate breakfast, 60% said they always or usually ate a bowl of cereal.

### Whole-grain cereal

In addition to eating breakfast daily, it's also important to eat a healthful breakfast. For example, whole-grain breakfast cereals were associated with a reduction in insulin resistance, whereas refined cereals were not. In another study, African Americans who ate high-fiber breakfasts, such as oatmeal, weighed 5% less than those who didn't.

Data from another study, the Nielsen's National Eating Trends Survey, show that women who were frequent cereal eaters (those eating cereal more than 7 times in a 2-week period) weighed about 8 pounds less on average than women eating cereal infrequently or not at all.

## Easy breakfast ideas

For optimal health, start each day with a good breakfast. Your meal doesn't have to consist of "breakfast foods." Any nutritious food will do.

Aim for healthy foods in enough quantity to give you 25–35% of your daily calories. Try:

- A banana, a handful of pecans, and low-fat yogurt
- Whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk or soymilk, sprinkled with berries and slivered almonds
- Peanut butter on whole-grain toast, topped with cooked peaches, applesauce, or blueberries.
- Strawberry/melon/yogurt smoothie and a bran muffin made with raisins and walnuts
- An orange and 2 buckwheat pancakes topped with unsweetened applesauce
- A low-fat, whole-grain bagel spread with low-fat cream cheese and cantaloupe slices
- Fruit salad and a whole-grain blueberry muffin
- Vegetable soup and a slice of whole-grain toast topped with avocado
- Oatmeal with apple slices and low-fat milk, 1 slice whole-wheat toast spread with trans-fat-free margarine, and a glass of juice
- Cottage cheese, pineapple slices, and whole-grain crackers
- Breakfast burrito (fill a whole-wheat tortilla with sautéed onions, peppers, mushrooms, yams, and tomatoes seasoned with garlic and thyme)
- Low-calorie muesli with low-fat yogurt and apricots
- Tuna mixed with celery and low-fat mayonnaise served on toasted whole-grain bread



For more healthy breakfast ideas, go to:

[www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/tips/index.html](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/tips/index.html)

### References:

1. Pereira MA et al. *American Heart Association's 43rd Conference on Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology and Prevention*. 2003.
2. Lisa F. Berkman, Lester Breslow. *Health and Ways of Living. The Alameda County Study*. Oxford University Press. 1983.
3. Wyatt HR et al. 2001. *Long-term weight loss and breakfast in subjects in the National Weight Control Registry*. *Obesity Research*. 2002; 10:78-82.
4. *Breakfast and Your Health*. *Harvard Men's Health Watch*. February 1, 2005.





# Eat Breakfast Daily

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**Instructions**

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record each day you eat breakfast. Use this calendar to also record your exercise program (minutes/day), weekly weight, and any other items you may want to track.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you ate a healthy breakfast. You must meet this goal at least 22 days during the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this healthy practice for a lifetime of good health!
4. Turn in your Health Challenge™ if requested, or enter your completion of this Health Challenge™ on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month, if applicable. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>		
ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____		
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ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____		

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I ate a healthy breakfast.

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

**Other wellness projects completed this month:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

