

Breakfast: The habit for a lifetime

Breakfast is important for everyone, whatever your age or lifestyle. Breakfast is the first meal of the day and 'breaks the fast' - the time between the last meal or snack you ate before you went to bed and the first thing you eat the next day. Everybody needs the boost of energy breakfast provides in the morning.

Modern breakfast cereal was first produced at the end of the 19th century and are now the most popular choice of breakfast in the UK and the USA with the rest of Europe following. Ready-to-eat cereals can offer healthy choices and variety. As well as being tasty, they are quick and easy to prepare and eat.

Today, a healthy diet is all about balance; eating **more** of some foods and **less** of others and eating certain foods **more often** than others. Eating a daily breakfast of breakfast cereal that is low in fat, high in fibre, low in sugar and fortified with certain vitamins and minerals is a big step towards this.

Why eat breakfast?

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It provides us with the boost of energy we need first thing in the morning and helps to keep us going until our next snack or meal. Research has shown that people who skip breakfast do not perform as well either physically or mentally

as those who do eat breakfast. Other research demonstrates that eating breakfast could also improve your mood and behaviour - good news for those of us who are not at our best in the morning! In addition, breakfast cereals with milk can provide us with up to 30% of the daily requirements of several key nutrients that are essential to our health and wellbeing.

Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals are an ideal choice:

- **High in fibre:** All cereals contain fibre. For health choose those with a high fibre content.
- **Low in fat**
- **Fortified with vitamins and minerals (micronutrients):** Vitamins and minerals are needed to regulate body processes and maintain health.
- **Provide energy:** Breakfast should provide about 20% of our daily nutrient intake. Breakfast provides an energy boost first thing in the morning and continues to provide energy until our next snack or meal.
- **Eaten with milk:** Milk is an excellent source of calcium which we need for healthy bones and teeth. Milk also contains other vitamins and minerals.
- **Quick to prepare, quick and easy to eat:** Most of us are time pressured in the morning. Breakfast cereals are ready-to-eat, quick to prepare and easy to eat anywhere!
- **Adaptable:** can add different things like fruit or yoghurt or eat anytime of the day





Breakfast is for everyone and is important nutritionally whatever their age:

- **Young Children:** Breakfast cereals such as Weetabix and ready brek make an ideal breakfast. They are also quick and easy to prepare.
- **Children:** Encouraging the breakfast habit is important in children as they need energy and nutrients not only to keep healthy but for growth too. Breakfast cereals provide a healthy start to the day and will help children enjoy their activities, concentrate at school and give them energy to work and play.
- **Teenagers:** Adolescence, a time when skipping breakfast is common, is an important period of growth and development. A breakfast of fortified, ready-to-eat, breakfast cereals not only provides energy for the school day but essential nutrients too and makes a great snack at anytime.
- **Adults:** Missing breakfast is more likely to make you less alert and affect your work. Research has also shown that nutrients missed at breakfast are not necessarily made up later in the day. If you want to be at your best in the morning, make breakfast part of your daily routine.
- **Older Adults:** Try and choose the higher fibre varieties. Have a look at the wide range next time you're shopping – variety is the spice of life.

There are loads of myths about breakfast:

'Skipping breakfast won't hurt. I can make up for it later'

No! Eating breakfast improves your performance and feeling of wellbeing and means you are less likely to snack during the day. Breakfast makes a significant contribution to your daily intake of vitamins and minerals, particularly if it includes fortified breakfast cereal. Research has shown if you skip breakfast you do not 'catch up' nutritionally later in the day.

'Skipping breakfast will help me to lose weight'

No! Research has shown that people who lose weight successfully and keep it off eat breakfast. Missing breakfast makes you more likely to snack or overeat later in the day. A serving of an unsweetened, low-fat, high fibre fortified breakfast cereal with low fat milk will provide a healthy start to your day and help prevent you being tempted to snack later on.



Stuck in a breakfast rut or want to make the most of breakfast? Here are some ideas to help you:

- Add fruit, fresh, tinned or dried to your cereal for extra taste and a boost of fibre and vitamin C.
- Have a glass of unsweetened fruit juice with your fortified breakfast cereal. It will give you a boost of vitamin C and help you absorb the iron in your breakfast cereal more efficiently.
- Have a good look at the variety of cereals available. Try something different or re-visit an old favourite. Keep a choice of cereals in the house to help overcome breakfast boredom.
- Experiment with mixing cereals.... A handful of this, a spoonful of that. This can be especially useful when trying to encourage a healthier choice for children or slowly increasing the fibre content of your breakfast.
- Enjoy your breakfast! It's difficult in the morning when everyone is time pressured but eating together can encourage the breakfast habit and allowing time for breakfast makes it a pleasurable, stress-free experience.
- Keep some cereal at the office for your 'deskfast'
- If you are in a rush or prefer to 'breakfast on the go' breakfast drinks or breakfast 'biscuits' are a better choice than choc bars, savoury snack, pastry or cakes that you might be tempted to grab

