

HEALTHY EATS

Breakfast Club

ARE YOU EATING THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY?

By *Kerri-Ann Jennings*



● Pop quiz: Your typical breakfast is a) coffee...that counts, right? ● b) a pastry from the dining hall, c) nothing—you don't wake up during breakfast hours, or d) yogurt and a banana from the mini-fridge in your dorm room.

Clearly, the last choice is ideal, but lots of students make a habit of skipping breakfast or just downing sugary pastries or coffee drinks. If that's you, hear this: Breakfast really is the most important meal of the day.

Why? If you eat breakfast, you'll have more stamina for those 8 a.m. classes and feel better later on, says Meghan Windham, MPH, RD, LD, campus dietitian at Texas A&M University. Plus, she says, "you'll find you're not starving at lunch and won't overeat."

Research backs up breakfast's boons. Young adults who eat breakfast regularly tend to be leaner, think sharper, and have better overall nutrition than those who skip the morning meal. Breakfast also gives you an opportunity to get important nutrients—such as calcium (from yogurt or from milk in your cereal or café au lait), fiber (from whole grains and fruit), and the many vitamins and minerals in fruits and vegetables.

If you're not in the habit of eating breakfast, start now. Windham advises students to "eat something." Even if you're short on time, it takes just seconds to grab a granola bar or piece of fruit as you head to class. And a little planning will keep your dorm room or apartment stocked with breakfast staples. Your mini-fridge can hold low-fat yogurt, fruit, and hard-boiled eggs (you can find these at many food stores or just snag them from the dining hall).

RIGHT START

CAMPUS DIETITIAN MEGHAN WINDHAM, MPH, RD, LD, SUGGESTS BREAKFASTS YOU CAN EASILY MAKE—AND WANT TO EAT—IN THE MORNING.

IN YOUR ROOM

Non- or low-fat Greek yogurt topped with low-sugar, high-fiber cereal (such as Cheerios or All-Bran) and a banana

Whole grain tortilla rolled up with natural peanut butter and a banana

Microwaved eggs: Crack an egg into a mug and stir with a fork. Nuke for about 30 seconds until cooked.

Trail mix, a piece of fruit, and low-fat Greek yogurt

IN THE DINING HALL

Hard-boiled egg and sliced avocado on whole grain toast

DIY café au lait: Heat half a cup of milk in the microwave and top with coffee and a dash of cinnamon for a calcium-rich pick-me-up

Half a whole wheat bagel with reduced-fat cream cheese, tomato, red onion, and sprouts

Granola bars and dry cereal are also easy to stash. And don't forget the dining hall—if you have a little extra time in the morning, you can make a healthy meal there.

Timing is an issue, too. If you wake up at 9 but have breakfast at 11, does that count? Not so much. Windham encourages you to eat within an hour of waking up. If you work out first thing in the morning, try to eat within a half hour of finishing. It's good to nibble something before you exercise, but Windham says to "literally go with your gut—if it doesn't feel right, don't do it."

Once you start to eat *something* for breakfast, Windham encourages you to make your breakfast count. Follow this easy formula for a healthy morning meal: protein + whole grains + fruits or vegetables. It's a winning combination to fuel your day and keep you satisfied.

Protein, Windham says, "helps you feel fuller because it takes longer to digest, so it'll have a lasting effect throughout the day, taking you past 9 o'clock rather than just get you to lunch."

Reviewed by **Hansa Bhargava, MD**
WebMD Medical Editor