

HEALTHY BREAKFASTS TO START THE DAY

Breakfasts should be a piece of cake in a manner of speaking. Even though the *last* thing you should eat for breakfast is cake. Breakfast is the meal that gets everyone up and moving. After a night of sleep, you wake up hungry. You need the nutrients that a good and healthy breakfast offers to keep you at your sharpest.

It has been proven over and over again that a child who eats a healthy breakfast does better in school and is more likely to have the “get-up and go” to take part in physical activities. The nutrients aid concentration and brain development. They boost your memory and your energy levels. They’ll also help you to be more creative. And *healthy* foods will keep *you* healthy. Starting the day off right will promote good eating habits throughout the day. Once you start a habit like that, it can go on forever.

The ideal breakfast would include protein, fruits and/or veggies, grains and dairy. It’s tough to get all of that into one meal in the morning, but let’s try.

STAPLES:

You can keep a stock of breakfast foods in the refrigerator, cabinet or freezer. That way you’ll always have something to work with even if you’re in a rush. Below are the basics:

1. Eggs - there are so many things to do with them.
2. Bagels and English muffins - whole wheat is best, and you can keep them in the freezer for a long time.
3. Pancake mix
4. Cereal - hot or cold, all kinds. Try to stay away from the kinds with added sugar, please. You can add a bit of honey, cinnamon or fruit as a topping.
5. Whole or low-fat milk
6. Yogurt
7. Fruit - either fresh or frozen will do. Keeping some frozen fruit in the freezer is a great idea; you can use it in so many ways. (Use them instead of ice-cubes in a smoothie).
8. Fruit juice - If this is what you’d like to serve, make sure that it’s 100% fruit juice.
9. Peanut butter

Most of us think of these foods when we think of breakfast; it’s how you put them together that makes it special.

SMOOTHIES:

A big winner for kids in the morning are smoothies. They can have all of the nutrients your little one needs at the beginning of the day. Here are some easy tips for getting started. After you’ve mastered these, go crazy and try whatever makes your family happy.

1. Most people use milk for the starter. This can be dairy, soy, almond or coconut milk. You can use juice, but use 100% pure juice. You can also use water. Water will work best if you’re going to add either fresh or frozen fruit.
2. You need fruits or vegetables. When you get the hang of this, you’ll see that depending on what you use, the amount of liquid you use will vary. Frozen fruits and vegetables will keep the price down.

3. There are a few more add-ons you can think about adding like cinnamon, honey or vanilla extract. You can use peanut butter to add thickness, too. For a real protein punch you can toss in protein powder. Chia and flax seeds are both good sources of omega-3 fatty acids and are nutrient rich. If you like it creamier add some avocado.
4. If you want your smoothies to taste cooler and be thicker add some ice cubes. Start with a few, you can always add more.
5. BLEND. You will want to blend the ingredients until everything is fully mixed. The liquid at the top should be swirling and diffusing back down to the bottom. It can take up to 45 seconds for this to happen depending on the power of your motor and how full the container is. Blenders start at about \$25 and can go all the way up into the hundreds.

The *best part* of making a smoothie is that your little ones can take part. They can tell you exactly what they want and the smoothies can have a different flavor every single day.

EGGS:

Round up the usual suspects! If you think of a Denny's breakfast menu you'll most likely imagine eggs and potatoes and probably some fruit. Eggs are a mainstay for breakfast. If you're going to make some, remember that your children can help. They can crack the eggs, or stir them, or watch them cook if you poach them. You can put a poached or scrambled egg on a muffin or bagel. You can keep a bowl of hard boiled eggs in the refrigerator and in the time it takes the muffin to toast, you're just about done! Add a banana to the plate and in 5 minutes breakfast is served.

PANCAKES, WAFFLES, FRENCH TOAST AND MORE:

To save time you can make pancake or waffle batter the night before. You can serve them with low-calorie syrup or pile them up with fruit. You can eat some fruit on the side. You can add a scrambled egg to the top.

You can make French toast with just about any bread in the house. Soak the bread in a combination of eggs and milk with a splash of cold water and a dash of cinnamon. Once the bread is soggy put it onto a griddle or into a pan with some melted butter. Cook it as light or dark as you like. As with the pancakes, pile them up with fruit. It will taste like dessert.

Matzo brei is a lot like French toast. It's pronounced *motzoh-bry* in case you've never heard of it. Buy a box of matzo - they last for months and months if you keep the box closed - and take out a sheet or more of matzo. Break it into smaller pieces and soak it in an egg and milk mixture. Melt some butter in a pan, and then keep stirring it as it cooks in the pan. When it's finished the pieces will be flimsy and lovely. Top it with applesauce or jam or preserves.

OTHER GREAT CHOICES:

Make a combo sandwich. Toast one slice of bread and then slice a hardboiled egg on top of it. Top that off with some low-fat cheese (Swiss is yummy) and put under the broiler until the cheese is gooey. You can add some tomatoes before or after you heat it.

Cottage cheese is a great base for eating fruit for breakfast. The fruit can be fresh or frozen, thawed of course, or even canned (canned fruits tend to have a higher sugar content though). Put a slice of whole wheat bread or a warm muffin on the side and you're all ready.

How about yogurt? Be careful if you buy the flavored kind. There are hidden calories in there. This isn't a problem for most kids who are going to run around all day, but you want to keep an eye on it.

Use last night's leftovers for a quick and tasty breakfast. Make a breakfast burrito or breakfast taco or breakfast pizza. Pile the goods on a tortilla or flat bread and heat in the microwave. You can also sneak a scrambled egg in there.

Flavor your own cream cheese! You can stir in frozen or in-season cherries. Or strawberries. You can make your own lox/cream cheese spread. Ask your child what she'd like and let her do the mixing. Then put it on a bagel and everyone's happy.

Did you know that you can make whole grain cereal in a slow cooker? Put it all together before you go to bed, and when the morning comes, it's ready to be eaten. No one has to wait for anything...just top with some fruit, raisins, cinnamon and more.

When you get right down to it, breakfast can be anything. People around the world eat all sorts of things and manage to keep on going. All you want out of this morning meal is enough nutrients to make you feel good and take care of your dietary requirements. If you have a picky eater in the house who *will not* go the entire healthy eating routine in the morning, you can make up for it later in the day with healthy snacks and the remaining meals. You want to start the day off happy.

Most kids really like breakfast because they're hungry. Make them a part of the process and you can all be smiling as you start the day. And who wouldn't smile at a funny face made of fruit on a pancake?

