

Boosting Breakfast

by Nimali Fernando, MD, MPH

Kids who eat breakfast have more focused concentration and cognitive function and perform better in school. Here are some ways you can boost your breakfast so that it keeps you feeling full longer and has even more nutrition.



1. **PLAN BREAKFAST:** Families are busy, and it can be tough to get a nutritious breakfast each morning. Make large portions on the weekends and use breakfast leftovers during the week. Use the crockpot to simmer breakfast oatmeal overnight or try overnight-soaked oats so it's ready when you wake up. Put smoothie ingredients in a bag in the fridge and just pop them into the blender in the morning. Make a veggie quiche on the weekend so slices can be heated up on a busy morning.
2. **BE MINDFUL OF SUGAR:** Common breakfast foods, like pancakes and syrup, are high in refined sugars. This type of breakfast may cause a spike in insulin, which leaves kids hungry well before lunchtime. Be mindful of added sugar by avoiding sugary drinks, flavored yogurts, and processed breakfast foods. Read the labels of pre-packaged breakfast foods and remember, 4 grams of sugar equals one teaspoon. Breakfast cereals, for example, should have no more than 5 grams of sugar per serving.
3. **TURN UP THE PROTEIN:** Adding some protein to breakfast provides a much slower release of energy, which may help kids to concentrate all morning. Add nut butter, eggs, cheese, and/or beans to breakfast to boost your breakfast with protein. Try to limit processed meats like bacon and sausage which can be high in saturated fats and may have unhealthy preservatives.
4. **DON'T FORGET FIBER:** Most kids in the US are not meeting the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables, and most breakfast convenience foods skip fruits and veggies altogether. They may also use refined grains instead of whole grains, leaving kids with little to no fiber to start their day. Try to include fresh or frozen fruits and veggies in breakfast. Add fruit to oatmeal or some veggies to scrambled eggs. Whole grains also provide an extra boost of fiber.
5. **TRY A SMOOTHIE:** Some kids are not super hungry first thing in the morning. Try "drinkable" options like breakfast fruit smoothies for kids who aren't ready to eat. Smoothies let you get your fruits and veggies in and are packed with fiber. Add protein, like a scoop of nut butter to make it extra nutritious and filling.
6. **THINK OUT OF THE BOX:** Young kids tend to be hungriest in the morning, so make sure your most nutrient-dense meal is in the morning. In many other countries, breakfast is similar to lunch. You don't have to stick to traditional breakfast foods. Try serving dinner leftovers like soup for a nutritious breakfast.



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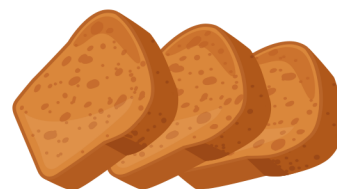
Ways to Boost Breakfast



Eggs



Spinach



Wheat Toast



Cereal



Plain Yogurt



Berries



Bagel



Peanut Butter



Orange Slices



Berries



Spinach



Plain Yogurt



Smoothie



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