



4 Tasty Ways to Enjoy Better Breakfast Bites

Based on modern science (and the wisdom of mothers through the ages), breakfast is definitely a very important meal. Research shows that breaking your overnight fast with a balanced meal can make a major difference in your overall health and well-being. Eating a smart breakfast can help improve your attitude, enhance work or school performance, foster a healthy weight, and lower your risk of heart disease and stroke. On the other hand, skipping breakfast is a no-brainer – literally. Skip breakfast – and your brain and body suffer all day. Here's how to eat well in the morning and get started on the nutrition fast track to a high-energy, health-smart day.

Start with some powerful protein.

The missing link in many morning meals, protein is what you need to go strong and stay focused until lunch. Go lean with protein – a slice or two of Canadian bacon, an egg, some smoked salmon, a slice of deli meat or cheese, a container of yogurt, a scoop of cottage cheese, or leftover meat from the night before. Think outside of the breakfast box - microwave a quesadilla on a whole wheat tortilla with black beans or enjoy a tofu scrambler with chopped veggies and grated cheese.

Add in longer-lasting whole grains.

A high-octane carbohydrate will help energize your body and brain for a busy day. Choose whole grains for an extra nutrition punch. They have more fiber and more antioxidants, plus they tend to digest more slowly and provide longer lasting energy. Go inside the cereal box for hot (especially oatmeal and multi-grain) or cold varieties. Whole grain breads, muffins, waffles, pancakes, rolls, tortillas, or even pastas can also help you rise, shine, and rev up your metabolism.

Get fresh with fruits (or veggies).

Breakfast is a perfect time to enjoy the produce your body needs for optimal health. Go with fresh fruit - bananas, kiwi, pears, apples, mangoes, melon, oranges, grapefruit, or whatever is in season! Canned (pineapple or mandarin oranges) and frozen (blueberries and strawberries) can be used in yogurt parfaits and mixed fruit salads. Dried fruit is delicious on a bowl of cereal or in a bag of trail mix. How about chopped vegetables in an omelet or a refreshing glass of veggie juice? Looking for more ideas, check out www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/

Rethink your morning drinks.

Some of us can't seem to get going without that morning cup of coffee - or that triple, extra whipped, tall mocha! While a moderate amount of caffeine is probably fine for most healthy adults (except pregnant women), many Americans are getting lots of extra calories from fancy coffee drinks. Non-fat or 1% milk is a very smart choice - plain or blended into a smoothie, shake, or latte. Concerned about caffeine overload? Switch to decaf, herbal tea, or lower-caffeine green tea.

What about breakfast bars? So-called "energy bars" are everywhere and the packages are filled with nutrition promises – to replace meals, boost energy levels, promote weight loss, and pump up your intake of protein, vitamins, and minerals. There's no magic 'pep' in these bars. The energy is from calories, just like other foods. Some are no more than 'souped-up' candy bars, with lots of fat, saturated fat, and sugar. **Choose bars with 10-15 grams of protein and at least 3 grams fiber.**