

Breakfast—Still Kids’ Most Important Meal of the Day

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Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It fuels your child with enough energy to learn and play. Encouraging good breakfast eating habits early in life provides good nutrition for the short haul and good eating habits for a lifetime. However, if you’re like many of today’s parents, mornings are hectic—getting yourself and your children dressed and ready for the day and taking care of morning chores often mean little or no time for breakfast for the family. What can you do?

The best laid plans. . .With a little planning the night before, you can be sure that your kids begin the next day with the best nutrition start possible. Before bed, put out plates, bowls, utensils, cereal boxes, and bagels or bread. In the morning add a serving of fruit, such as bananas or peaches, and low-fat milk to the cereal or pop the bread in the toaster and add a spread of margarine or preserves. You have a quick and nutritiously balanced breakfast!

But don’t forget yourself and your own breakfast! You, too, will have a better, more nutritious day if you sit down and eat breakfast with your children. It can be an enjoyable start to the day. However, if you find yourself running out of time for breakfast, at least grab a granola bar and a box of juice or milk for your own burst of energy!

Tips for those who skip breakfast. . .If you have a breakfast skipper in your home, try instilling new habits by offering quick and nutritious choices, like a granola bar and juice, yogurt with fresh fruit, or even a slice of pizza left over from last night’s dinner with a glass of juice. A balanced and healthful breakfast can include two servings from the bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group, a serving from the fruit group, and a serving from the milk, yogurt, and cheese group of the MyPlate food guidance system.

Breakfast provides the “get up and go”. . . Breakfast is important because it provides a major part of a child’s daily energy supply. Children who eat breakfast are better nourished than those who skip breakfast. Also, children who eat breakfast are more likely to meet their daily need for certain essential vitamins and minerals than breakfast skippers. Healthy, nutritious breakfast choices can include cereal, toast, bagels, or English muffins. Children who eat breakfast consisting of a bowl of ready-to-eat sweetened cereal, skim milk, and a glass of juice start their day the low-fat way and meet some of their iron and B-vitamin requirements for the day. Pancakes, waffles, or a veggie omelet served with a glass of juice and milk is also nutritious fare, providing a good balance of protein, vitamins, and minerals to begin the day.

The calories supplied by breakfast provide children with energy to get through the morning until snack or lunch time. Studies show that children who eat breakfast:

- Learn better,
- Are more alert and attentive,
- Are more likely to participate in activities.

(Source: Fact Sheet from American Dietetic Association, 1995)

For more information about healthy eating, contact the Hardee County Extension Office at 863-773-2164.