

## Importance of eating breakfast <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I would like to know the importance of breakfast. Why do we have to have breakfast?

Breakfast Boycotter

### **Answer**

Dear Breakfast Boycotter,

Your brain (and central nervous system) run on glucose — that's the fuel you need to think, walk, talk, and carry on any and all activities. Let's say that the last time you eat something at night is at 10 or 11 PM (not optimal, just an example). The following day, you don't eat breakfast but wait until about noon or so to eat — you've gone thirteen or fourteen hours with nothing in your system. Your poor brain is surely deprived — and your body has to work extra hard to break down any stored carbohydrate or turn fat or protein into a usable form for your brain to function. That's a lot to ask for when you're sitting in a classroom, trying to concentrate on reading, or doing any other work. Eating breakfast has been proven (many times) to improve concentration, problem solving ability, mental performance, memory, and mood. You will certainly be at a disadvantage if your classmates have eaten breakfast and you've gone without. On average, they will think faster and clearer, and will have better recall than you. School or work can be tough enough without this extra added pressure.

Breakfast skippers also have a harder time fitting important nutrients into their diet. Many foods eaten at breakfast contain significant amounts of vitamins C and D, calcium, iron, and fiber.

Some people believe that skipping breakfast may help them lose weight. Not so! Skipping meals often leads to overeating later in the day. Becoming overhungry often leads to a lack of control and distorted satiety signals (meaning it's hard to determine when you're full). This can result in taking in more calories than if one had an appropriate breakfast. As a matter of fact, it's easier to control one's weight by eating smaller meals and snacks more frequently.

What if there's just no time in the morning to eat breakfast? There are plenty of items you can

bring along with you to school or work. Carry a resealable bag of easy-to-eat whole grain cereal, or bring a yogurt or small box of skim milk, juice, or fruit. If you just can't stomach food in the morning, try to have *a little something* — such as some juice — and bring along a mid-morning snack. Other good portable items include: whole grain crackers, a hard boiled egg, cottage cheese, low-fat granola bars, or even a peanut butter sandwich. Single serving hot cereals, such as oatmeal, are handy — all you have to do is add hot water, available at most cafeterias or delis.

Whatever your choice, *eat something*. If you think you're doing fine with no breakfast, just try changing your tune for a week —you're likely to notice a difference. You will undoubtedly perform better with some fuel in your system, and, hopefully, become a breakfast believer.

Alice!

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[Optimal Nutrition](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

[Healthy Eating](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

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