

Breakfast: What's the big deal?

1. Breakfast is the fuel that keeps you running throughout the day.

Skipping breakfast before you start your busy day forces you to run with the fuel gauge on empty. Think about it: the last time you ate was probably no later than 8 or 9 pm the night before. This means that if you wait until noon or 1:00 pm to take a lunch break, you have gone 16 hours without filling the tanks, so to speak.

Waiting so long to eat means your blood sugar levels are at a minimum. You may feel nauseous or light-headed, and you probably have trouble concentrating. Eating breakfast ensures that you have the energy you need to keep your focus and feel energized throughout the morning.

2. Breakfast keeps the synapses firing.

Your brain and nervous system depend on constant supplies of glucose to function properly. Skipping breakfast deprives you of the nutrients you need to keep your memory, cognition, and analytical abilities functioning normally. In fact, studies have shown that people who miss breakfast score consistently lower on memory tests.

3. Breakfast prevents binge eating.

When you skip breakfast, you naturally get very hungry before lunch time. Studies have shown that this encourages overeating and poor food choices – when you are excessively hungry, you are more likely to choose foods that are unhealthy and contribute to weight gain. Eating a healthy breakfast controls your hunger and has also been shown to limit stress eating.

4. Breakfast helps you lose weight.

If you are on a diet, it may seem like skipping a meal can help you to limit your calorie intake and speed the weight loss process. But the body actually doesn't work that way; going for long periods without eating shifts the body into a "starvation mode," where the metabolism switches into low gear in order to conserve any calories that are available. By skipping breakfast, you slow your metabolism and inhibit your ability to use the calories that you consume, thereby leading to weight gain. By eating a sensible breakfast, you can kick-start your metabolism and improve your body's fat-burning ability.

Tosca's quick oatmeal solution: Combine ½ cup oatmeal with 1 cup boiling water in a cereal bowl. Cover with a plate and let set for 10 minutes. For extra nutrients, the following can be added: ground flaxseed, wheat germ, nuts, berries, raisins, cinnamon, vanilla, low fat milk...the options are limitless.

****Remember that you need a protein to accompany your oatmeal

If you are not a big breakfast fan, you don't have to limit yourself to traditional breakfast foods. A bowl of brown rice and chopped fish, for example, is packed with vitamins and protein and tastes great. Let your imagination be your guide, and choose healthy foods that are low in refined sugars and animal fats.