

Morning Munching: Getting Your Kids Off to a Good Start

Ask your teenager if he'd drive the car with an empty gas tank. Now ask him if he eats breakfast. According to studies, more than 40 percent of kids today skip the most important meal of the day. Just as a car requires fuel to run, the body requires its own fuel to provide the energy a student needs to get through a day of learning and other activities.

Breakfast eaters have the performance edge

According to the American Dietetic Association, children who eat a healthy breakfast are able to concentrate better, work more quickly, make fewer mistakes, think more creatively, and score higher on tests. In addition, kids who "fuel up" with a nutritious start to the day are more likely to meet their daily nutritional needs, maintain a normal weight, and perform better in sports and other extracurricular activities.

How passing up breakfast affects your children

Conversely, children who skip breakfast are subject to suffering hunger symptoms, including headache, fatigue, sleepiness, irritability and inability to concentrate.

Why breakfast is the meal kids love to hate

Research has proven over and over again that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. So, why do so many kids opt out in the a.m.? Many report being too rushed in the morning. Others say they simply don't feel like eating.

Grab-and-go breakfasts make it easy

The key is to provide a quick, tasty, nutritious meal that kids will want to eat.

The American Dietetic Association recommends the following "on the go" breakfasts:

- Ready-to-eat cereal with fruit and milk
- Toasted bagel with cheese
- Fruit-filled breakfast bar and yogurt
- Toasted waffle topped with fruit and yogurt
- Fruit smoothie (fruit and milk whirled in a blender)
- Peanut butter on whole-wheat toast
- Prepackaged protein drinks (can be taken on the ride to school)

A healthy alternative for home breakfast skippers

If you can't provide a healthy breakfast for your child at home, many schools and daycare facilities offer a breakfast program.

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