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# Start Your Day Right

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*Eating breakfast helps you manage your weight better.*

*Skipping breakfast increases your risk of diabetes.*

## Start Your Day Right

BY WINSTON J. CRAIG

One in five Americans regularly skips breakfast. While it is considered to be the most important meal of the day, people give all kinds of reasons for ignoring breakfast. They say they are simply not hungry in the morning, or they cannot squeeze in a meal amid the morning rush. Some, who are trying to lose weight, skip breakfast in their efforts to remove a few hundred calories from their daily intake. Many others simply don't know the value of a healthy breakfast.

Unfortunately, millions of school children attend school every day having skipped or skimmed breakfast. These children manifest a greater irritability and anxiety, more disruptive behavior in the classroom, and a decreased ability to concentrate. In a two-week study, school children felt significantly more cheerful and indicated less fatigue on the day they consumed breakfast compared to the day they skipped breakfast.



Academic performance of children is generally better when breakfast is eaten.

Starting the day with a good breakfast improves work productivity and helps one function more efficiently. In a study of more than 800 nurses, eating breakfast was associated with lower stress, fewer cognitive failures, and fewer injuries and accidents at work. In the Alameda County Study, eating a regular breakfast was associated with a better quality of health and greater life expectancy.

Eating a good breakfast is normally associated with having good meals the rest of the day. Those who skip breakfast have a higher prevalence of other unhealthy eating habits and a poorer quality of diet overall. Studies of young people found that breakfast-skippers consume 40 percent more sweets, 55 percent more soft drinks, 45 percent fewer vegetables and 30 percent less fruit than people who eat breakfast.

When adolescents were followed for five years, those who skipped breakfast were consistently heavier than those who

did not. In a British study, those who ate breakfast actually consumed five percent fewer calories during the day. Examination of the eating habits of the more than 5,000 members of the National Weight Control Registry (persons who have lost an average of 66 pounds and kept it off for more than five years) found that almost 80 percent claim to be regular breakfast eaters.

The type of breakfast consumed has a significant effect upon the average energy intake at lunchtime. The amount of food ingested at lunchtime was lower after a low glycemic index (GI) breakfast (high-fiber whole grains, rice and beans, barley, nuts, apples, berries and citrus) compared to a high GI breakfast (sweetened refined cereals, potatoes, biscuits, donuts and refined breads). It is believed that low GI foods may play an important role in weight control, and decrease the risk of diabetes.

Male health professionals who skipped breakfast had 21 percent higher risk of diabetes than did those who consumed breakfast. Skipping breakfast also makes the metabolic control of Type 2 diabetes more difficult.

Eating breakfast is good for your health, so start your day right. Make time for a healthy breakfast.

Winston Craig, Ph.D., RD, is a professor of nutrition at Andrews University.