

Tips for Kids

Breakfast

Parents know that kids should eat in the morning - we keep hearing about research that tells us how kids who eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight, pay attention better in class, and even get sick less often.

So why is it that something so simple as *breakfast* can be so challenging?

Here are a few facts and tips to ease the stress and make mornings a little easier.

For starters, breakfast doesn't have to be just breakfast food. And it doesn't even have to be at home. If kids have a mid-morning break, plan for a snack that will pull double-duty as a late breakfast.

So what constitutes a good breakfast?

- Start with a source of **energy-boosting carbohydrates**, ideally including fiber-rich foods like whole grain breads, cereals, or fresh fruits.
- Add a source of **protein** to increase kids' alertness and ability to focus, to help them stay fuller until lunch time.
- Incorporate a **little fat**. An entirely fat-free breakfast can leave kids feeling hungry sooner (fat takes longer to digest, helping to ward off pre-lunch hunger pangs).

Here are a few **favorite breakfast options** that are nutritious and delicious ways for kids (and adults!) to start their days.

For mornings when you need to grab and go:

- **Special K Protein Plus and Kashi Go Lean** are two favorite cereals that are fiber-filled and high in protein. Top with fresh berries and fat-free or 1% milk, and you've got an effortlessly balanced, nutrient-dense breakfast.

- **Sandwiches** aren't just for lunch anymore. Pile on the lean meats (turkey, ham, chicken, roast beef), and add flavor with a slice of cheese, a spread of hummus, or a wedge of Laughing Cow Cheese.
- Smearing **peanut butter** (or almond butter) and 100% fruit preserves (or low-sugar jelly) onto one or two slices of whole grain bread can turn a classic lunchtime favorite into a fast, tasty breakfast.
- Even a **grilled cheese sandwich** (or cheese toast) is a tasty breakfast that you can eat with one hand.
- A **protein shake** is convenient to sip on the go, as long as you don't mind taking the time to blend it before you leave. Try mixing protein powder with milk or soy milk, berries (fresh or frozen), ice, and one tablespoon of ground flaxseed (optional).
- No time to blend? Grab a ready to drink protein drink like Muscle Milk Light or EAS AdvantEDGE.

For mornings when you need to grab and go: (continued)

- **Nutrition bars** are another great portable breakfast option, but some varieties contain more sugar than protein or fiber. Here are a few bars that fit the bill: Think Thin, EAS AdvantEDGE, Kashi Go Lean Crunchy bar, and South Beach Living Protein Fit bar.
- **Smart Ones' breakfast sandwiches** provide the convenience of a typical fast food breakfast sandwich, but with less saturated fat *and* without the hassle of the drive-thru line.

If all else fails, even just drinking a glass of fat-free or low-fat milk is better than nothing, as it provides carbohydrates, protein, calcium, and vitamin D.

For mornings when you have a little more time:

- A frittata (an open-faced omelet with the typical add-ins mixed into the eggs rather than used as a filling) can be simpler to make than an omelet, and an excellent way to incorporate vegetables in the morning, including leftover veggies from dinner. Try using one whole egg, along with egg whites, for a low-fat, protein-packed breakfast. Serve with antioxidant-rich fresh fruit for a source of energy-boosting carbohydrates.
- For those who don't love eggs, hide them in French toast. Dip whole grain bread into mixture of egg, vanilla, and a dash of cinnamon, and grill. Top with fresh berries to up the antioxidant-factor.

- Make a breakfast pizza by spreading pizza sauce onto a whole wheat English muffin. Add shredded chicken, Canadian bacon, and/or center-cut bacon. Top with mozzarella and broil.
- **Leftovers** can be perfect for kids who don't love breakfast foods. Extra chicken or steak from last night's dinner can be reheated for a protein-boosting accompaniment to the standard toast or fresh fruit, or served with leftover pasta, rice, or potatoes.
- A **fresh fruit parfait** is a good source of calcium *and* high in protein when made with cottage cheese or authentic Greek yogurt, topped with fresh fruit and slivered almonds.
- A **cheesy quesadilla** is another quick and easy calcium-rich breakfast: melt shredded low-fat cheese onto a whole wheat tortilla, and fold in half (or top with a second tortilla).
- A whole grain toaster **waffle topped with peanut butter** or almond butter provides a satisfying blend of fiber, heart-healthy fat, and protein.
- Pump up the staying power of old-fashioned **oatmeal** by adding **nuts, peanut butter, or protein powder**. Or you can opt for protein-enriched instant oatmeal (**Quaker Weight Control packets** and **Kashi Go Lean** hot cereal packets are low in sugar, *and* have double the protein of traditional oatmeal).
- Those with bolder tastes can get a dose of **brain-boosting omega-3's** with **smoked salmon and reduced-fat cream cheese** on a toasted whole wheat bagel (or mini whole wheat bagel).

Adapted from The Times-Picayune, written by Molly Kimball, RD, CSSD, Sports and Lifestyle Nutritionist with Ochsner's Elmwood Fitness Center.