

# Breakfast is Best

- Becky Twaalfhoven

From an early age, the saying “breakfast is the most important meal of the day” has been drilled into our heads. Parents constantly remind their children to eat breakfast; health and wellness classes spend significant time dedicated to its importance. Why, then, do a third of the nation’s children and teens skip it?

According to a study conducted in 2008 at the University of Minnesota, up to a third of schoolchildren in the country forgo breakfast before school, a statistic that only increases as the children progress through high school. As a freshman in high school myself, I’m beginning to understand why. Every minute of my morning routine is precious, and it seems as though there is never enough time to do everything. The five minutes it takes to eat could easily become five extra minutes in the shower, or searching for a matching sock. Slept late? No chance. Didn’t finish all of your homework? Forget breakfast. And why not? For most teens, hunger takes second place to the multitude of small crises taking place in their lives, especially with the school day starting earlier and retribution for lateness becoming ever stricter. The countless reprimands from parents are a small price to pay compared to showing up with incomplete homework, or getting detention. So when there simply is not enough time in a day to eat, what is the solution? It’s simple: make time.

You might be thinking, “Easier said than done.” You would be right. It is much easier to press “snooze” and turn over than to muster the willpower to rip off the blankets and step into the frigid reality of a Monday morning in January. Trust me, though, it’s worth it. Those five “extra” minutes of sleep are not going to help you much anyways if you skip breakfast. I’m sure everyone has heard it before: countless studies have indicated that children who eat breakfast perform at a higher level in school than their peers who don’t eat in the mornings. Skipping breakfast could mean the difference between passing and failing that first-block test, even if you managed to catch a few minutes of sleep (which is unlikely with a test first block). Another prominent factor in the issue is the stigma surrounding weight loss. To the average person, it sounds perfectly logical that skipping a meal, and thus instantly reducing calorie intake, can aid weight loss. While in the short-term you are reducing calories, the longterm effects of skipping breakfast actually have the opposite effect. Research strongly suggests that in skipping breakfast, one is actually setting themselves up for snacking and bigger meals later in the day.

Of course, the question still remains of how to make time to eat. My advice? First, consider setting the alarm five minutes earlier. I know it seems like a huge sacrifice, but it certainly pays off. If you’re really pressed for time, try making the meal ahead of time. It is much easier to prepare food the night before than the morning of, when it seems that the clock speeds up and the school day looms closer. During the winter time, I find that eating a warm breakfast wakes me up and sets up my body and mind to

deal with the cold. Also, I recommend eating something you like. Losing time out of your morning routine is much easier to bear when the result is good food that energizes you. Of course, nutrition is a key factor in starting the day off right, and it can be difficult to find a quick breakfast that keeps you energized without overloading on sugar.

As a final helpful tip, I have included some creative suggestions for healthy make-ahead breakfast meals. You may be surprised to find cookies and even a pizza in the mix, but don't be fooled – all of the recipes are low in calories and packed with nutrients to kick-start your day. Enjoy!

1. Mediterranean Breakfast Sandwich
2. Strawberries and Cream Cheese Waffle Sandwiches
3. Overnight Blueberry Coffee Cake
4. Maple Corn Muffin and Sausage Sandwiches
5. Fruit, Nut, and Rice Fritters
6. Baked French toast Strips (with Apricot Sauce)
7. Greens and Bacon Omelet Wrap
8. Cranberry-Granola Bread
9. Eggs and Canadian bacon Pita
10. Banana-Oat Breakfast Cookie
11. Breakfast Pizza
12. Banana Millet Muffins
13. Spinach and Feta Omelet
14. Pomegranate Smoothie (Source: Better Homes and Gardens)

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