



Breakfast and why it's an important meal

“ Breakfast like a king, Lunch like a prince, Dine like a pauper”

This old saying has much truth in it. Breaking our fast from overnight, it really is the most important meal of the day.

We need to treat our bodies like machines giving them fuel first thing so that they work optimally during the day; but many children and adults have no breakfast. If we think of how we are going to use our food as fuel, morning and afternoon we are generally more active than we are in the evening and overnight. If that fuel doesn't get used up as energy there and then it will get stored away as fat.

What about those who say they are not hungry in the morning.

Generally, if dinner is lighter and eaten by 7pm we wake hungry the next morning but if we are eating large meals close to bedtime and then not burning that fuel up of course we are not going to feel hungry when we wake. Sometimes it takes shifting all of our meals around and making sure we are eating early enough.

But why do our children need breakfast before starting their day at school?

The brain needs energy to function, it helps with concentration and focus. We also want to be mindful of balancing blood sugars, if you start your day with a meal that is filled with sugar or a large amount of refined carbohydrates you are going to spike your blood sugar which will lead to an energy crash around midmorning and cravings for more sugar. By consuming protein, healthy fats and some unrefined carbohydrates you should be able to keep your energy and concentration going for longer. Research shows that children are twice as likely to score higher than average grades in assessments if they have started the day with a healthy breakfast. Sweets and crisps for breakfast do not have a positive effect on grades¹.

So how do you fit breakfast into an already busy morning?

It's all about being organised. Getting as much ready the night before as you can so that your morning is easier on all counts!

- Have all school bags packed and ready to go.
- Clothes out, ready to be worn.
- If pack lunches are being made, prep as much as you can the night before. My son gets leftovers from dinner the night before, I may cook some fresh veggies for him, or some pasta but otherwise it's all done.
- Prepping as much of breakfast as you can as well.
- Sometimes it just means getting up 10 minutes earlier.

Breakfast Ideas

- Big up your porridge – soak your oats the night before, they will only take 2 min to cook then. Add a couple of prunes, some grated carrot and apple to



bring sweetness. Cinnamon adds natural sweetness and improves uptake of glucose to your cells. Add seeds and nuts for some healthy fats. I do not recommend porridge for anyone who gets hungry quickly after eating oats as it means it is spiking their blood sugar too fast. A different type of breakfast is needed.

- Overnight oats can be soaked the night before and eaten cold, no need to cook. Put in a jar they could even be eaten in the back of the car on the way to school!
- A smoothie that has vegetables as well as fruit in it, plus some oats cooked rice, quinoa or buckwheat blended in, can be a simple breakfast.
- Chia seed pots with berries – careful not to make them too sweet
- Eggs done anyway, with a side of tomato salad, avocado or rocket or even serve fried eggs with dhal.
- Getting away from the idea that breakfast has to be toast or cereal, it needs to be a proper meal. In most of Southeast Asia breakfast is rice or noodle soup, prepared the day before and re-heated this is a filling and simple breakfast.

Here are some websites I recommend to clients for breakfast ideas:

<https://tasty.co/article/emofly/more-vegetables-for-breakfast>

<https://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/recipe-collections-favorites/chia-seed-breakfasts>

<https://ohsheglows.com/2015/05/23/gourmet-chia-seed-pudding-from-scratch/>

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/vegetarian-breakfast-recipes>

<https://thehealthychef.com/blogs/recipes/slow-cooked-brown-rice-congee>

ⁱ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/public-health-nutrition/article/association-between-breakfast-consumption-and-educational-outcomes-in-911-year-old-children/8174B87D235C67D22C0913F66E1ED6B4>