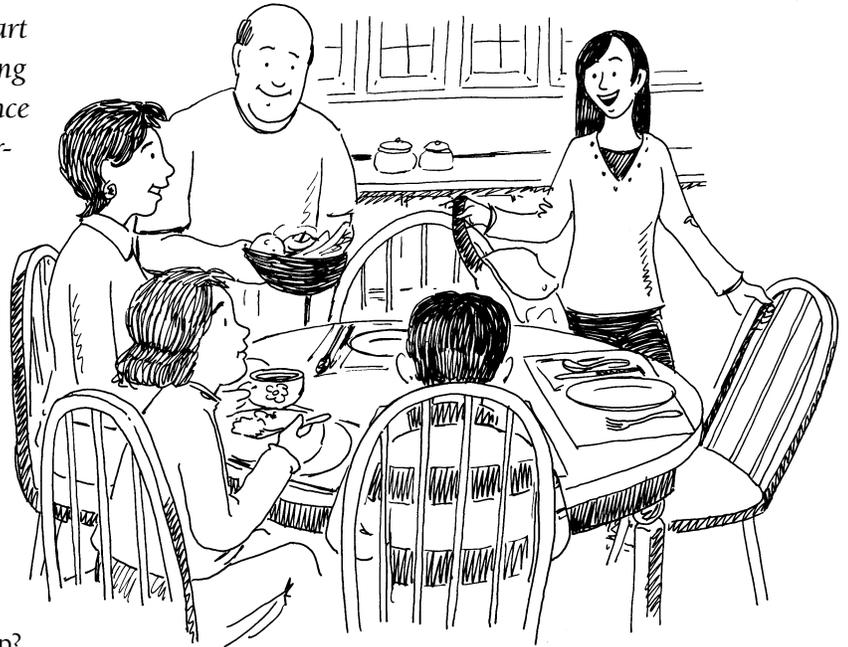


Breakfast 101

A healthy breakfast gets children off to a good start for the day and helps them do better in school. Eating breakfast can also keep kids at a healthy weight, since research shows that skipping breakfast leads to over-eating later in the day.

Use these tips to find ways to fit in a healthy morning meal at your house.

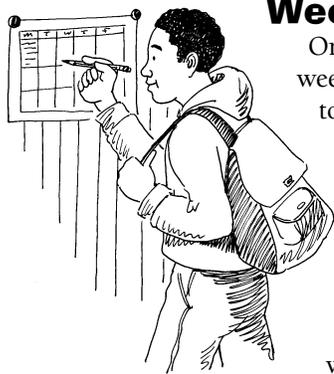


Morning routines

Make eating breakfast a daily habit that your teen or tween doesn't want to miss. Here's how.

Breakfast time!

Does your child prefer to eat right after she wakes up? Or would she rather shower and dress before heading to the kitchen? Try it both ways, and see which way allows her to be more relaxed and to eat without rushing. Join her for breakfast if possible—eating together is a great way for the two of you to connect first thing in the morning.



Weekly plan

On Sunday nights, talk about the week ahead. Perhaps your child has to be at school early on Tuesday or you have an early shift on Friday. Plan for those days by thinking about breakfast ahead of time. Also, try to find at least one day when the family can sit down together for breakfast, whether it's on a weekday or a weekend.

Time-savers

Prepare for busy mornings the night before. While one person is cleaning up from dinner, others can be getting things ready for the next day's breakfast. For example, your youngster might set the table, get out cereal boxes, or slice up fruit. Also, if your family takes lunches to work or school, make them the night before to free up time in the morning. *Tip:* For the ultimate time-saver, your teen could eat breakfast at school some days. He'll be able to choose a nutritious meal and also eat with friends.

In the kitchen

Whether your child has 10 minutes or a half hour, these breakfast ideas will be a hit.

Waffles and pancakes

Toast or microwave frozen waffles or pancakes (use whole-grain varieties). Or, if you have time, make pancake batter the night before, and cook the pancakes in the morning. Let your youngster add fresh fruit, nuts, and a little pure maple syrup on top.

Sandwich time

Here's a healthy "fast food" idea: homemade breakfast sandwiches. Layer scrambled eggs, low-fat cheddar cheese, and veggie sausage or turkey bacon between two slices of whole-grain toast or a toasted whole-wheat English muffin. Or put the eggs and cheese on a tortilla along with canned pinto beans. Top with tomato salsa, and roll up.



continued

Breakfast buffet

Kids appreciate choices. Set out a quick, no-cook buffet, and they can fill their plates with what they want. You might include bagels and flavored cream cheese, low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese cups, fresh fruit (apples, peaches, plums), and cereal bars. For drinks, add jugs of fat-free milk and orange juice.

Fruity treats

Fruit is a great part of any breakfast. Add protein for a more complete meal:

- Slice a banana lengthwise, and add “scoops” of low-fat vanilla and strawberry yogurt. Cover with blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries for a healthy banana split.
- Core an apple, and fill with cashew butter or cream cheese and raisins.
- On a skewer, alternate melon cubes, grapes, and pineapple chunks with squares of low-fat cheese.

Omelet bar

Let everyone build their own omelets. Put bowls of sliced mushrooms, diced onions and tomatoes, chopped spinach, and shredded low-fat cheese on the counter. Each person can beat two eggs in a bowl, add the fillings he likes, and cook up an omelet (or scrambled eggs).

Apple oatmeal

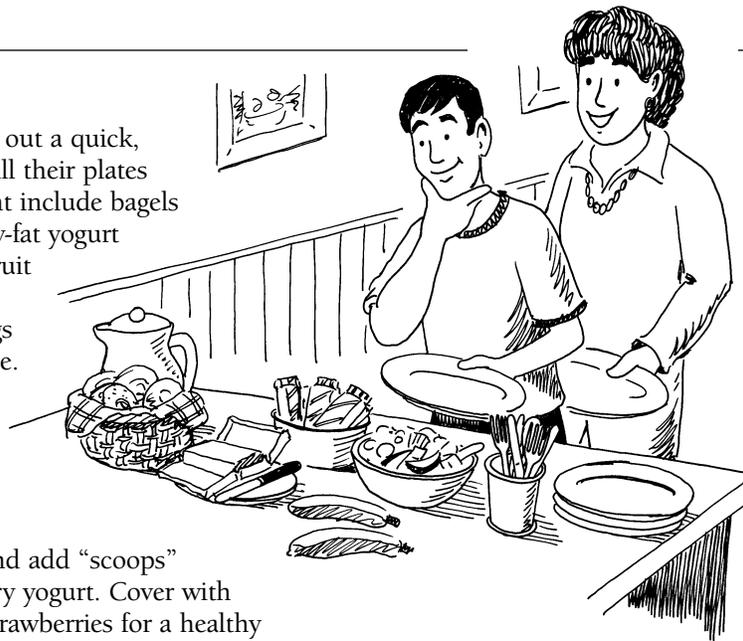
Instant oatmeal can be an easy, healthy breakfast—choose low-sugar varieties, and encourage your child to stir in fresh fruit like pear or mango chunks. Or make this naturally sweet version: Boil 1 cup water, ¼ cup 100% apple juice, and 1 diced apple. Stir in ⅓ cup quick-cooking oats and ¼ tsp. cinnamon. Cook according to package directions.



Drinkable meals

Cool and quick, these breakfasts are sure to suit any youngster:

- Peanut butter and banana shake: In a blender, combine 1 cup fat-free milk, ½ frozen banana (sliced), 1 tbsp. peanut butter, and 1 tsp. vanilla extract. Blend until creamy.
- Berry orange smoothie: Blend 1 cup orange juice, ½ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt, and ½ cup frozen strawberries.



Tomato toast

Here’s a tasty alternative to buttered toast. Mix ¼ cup low-sodium condensed tomato soup, ¼ cup fat-free milk, and 1 beaten egg. Dip whole-grain bread into mixture to coat. Sauté the slices in a nonstick pan until brown on both sides. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

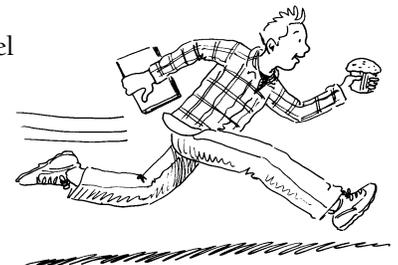
Dinner for breakfast

Your child might love last night’s leftovers (tacos, chicken) in the morning. Or try non-traditional breakfast food like chili, pasta, or a microwaved potato topped with broccoli and cheese.

On the go

For days when everyone is really short on time, try these portable breakfast items that your youngster can eat on the way to school:

- Hard-boil eggs, and peel them. Your child can eat one plain, or mash two eggs with a little low-fat mayonnaise, and tuck the egg salad into a pita half. *Safety Note:* Peeled hard-boiled eggs will stay fresh for three days in the refrigerator.
- Put individual servings of whole-grain cereal into zipper bags. Or toss together a trail mix of your youngster’s favorite cereal with nuts and dried fruit.
- Make this easy cereal “crumble”: Melt ¼ cup unsalted butter and 2 tbsp. pure maple syrup in a saucepan. In a bowl, mix 1 cup rolled oats, ½ cup whole-wheat cereal, 8 diced dried apricots, and a handful of golden raisins. Combine the two mixtures, and press into an 8 x 8 inch baking pan. Bake at 350° about 35 minutes. Cool, and spoon into small bags.
- Wrap cranberry or carrot muffins individually for a ready-made breakfast. *Note:* Store in the freezer and defrost the night before.



Editor’s Note: Teen Food & Fitness™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.