

## BREAKFAST: AN ESSENTIAL MEAL THAT CAN ALSO BE QUICK

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For children and teens, a morning meal is especially important. Breakfast prepares children to meet the challenges of learning. Breakfast eaters have higher school attendance, less tardiness, and fewer hunger-induced stomachaches in the morning. They concentrate better, solve problems more easily, and have better muscle coordination. Also, kids who eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight. Feeding your body in the morning kickstarts your metabolism, giving you more energy and allowing your body to burn more calories faster throughout the day. Furthermore, skipping breakfast may set you up for increased grazing later in the day.

If kids use the excuse of not being hungry, start them off with a light bite, such as juice or toast. Send with them a nutritious mid-morning snack, such as fruit, a cereal box, or crackers with cheese or peanut butter. If you're short on time, keep quick-to-fix foods on hand, or get breakfast foods ready the night before.

Following are some suggestions for breakfasts that are not only quick but also portable, for those times when there just is no time to sit down and eat before leaving the house. Many can also be used for nutritious mid-morning snacks. Include carbohydrates like whole grains and fruit for energy. Protein will help your kids feel full longer; dairy products, lean meat, and peanut butter are good protein choices.

Leftover veggie pizza with a piece of fruit and a container of low-fat or fat-free milk

A cup of low-fat yogurt mixed with fruit and topped with whole-grain cereal

Whole-grain bread covered with peanut butter and apple slices

A bagel topped with fat-free cream cheese and thin apple slices

A whole-wheat bagel spread with hummus or apple butter

A hard-boiled egg and a piece of fruit

Half of a whole-wheat pita stuffed with ½ cup of low-fat cottage cheese and sliced peaches, pears, or banana

A small pita pocket stuffed with leftover meat or chicken and low-fat cheese, and a box of 100% juice

Unsweetened cereal and a container of low-fat or fat-free milk

Turkey or ham rollups: a slice of turkey or ham with a piece of cheese

Mini rice cakes with peanut butter

A granola bar or a cereal bar with a piece of fruit or a box of 100% juice

A slice of whole-wheat bread spread with peanut butter and wrapped around a banana

A wheat tortilla spread with low-fat cream cheese and jelly or peanut butter and banana, rolled up for easy eating

A tortilla with refried beans, sprinkled with cheese  
Leftover rice mixed with low-fat yogurt, dried fruit, nuts, and cinnamon

No matter what you choose for breakfast, be sure to choose to eat breakfast!