

# What's Up With Not Eating Breakfast?



Do your children, teenagers, or other family members hurry out the door most mornings without eating breakfast? If you're like many of today's families, mornings are hectic - getting dressed and ready for the day and taking care of morning chores often means little or no time for breakfast for you or your family. According to a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture study and local studies conducted in Michigan, the number of kids who skip breakfast is increasing. It seems that breakfast starts to hit the wayside around grade 6 and goes downhill through grade 12. Parents, children, and teenagers state that **lack of time** is the biggest culprit. But kids who eat breakfast are likely to do better in school, have fewer behavioral problems, and say that they feel better throughout their day. Here are some tips on how to save time and promote healthy Grab-n-Go breakfasts in your home:

- **Package foods so that your kids can Grab-n-Go out the door with a quick and healthy selection that they can munch on in the car, on the bus, at their locker, or between morning classes such as granola and fruit-filled bars, crackers with cheese or peanut butter, fresh, canned, and dried fruit, fruit or vegetable juice, nuts, single-serving milk, string cheese, yogurt, or even half a sandwich or leftover pizza.**
- **Look for the *Eat Healthy. Eat Breakfast.* shelf tags distributed through-out participating grocery stores to help you identify *Great Grab-n-Go Breakfast Items* to have on hand.**
- **Set a good example. Young people are influenced by adults' eating habits, so be sure to *Eat Healthy. Eat Breakfast.* Your kids are watching.**

**Whatever you do...eat breakfast.**

# Getting Organized for Grab-n-Go Breakfasts



For most families, time is the major obstacle to eating breakfast. Be sure to choose a breakfast that requires little or no preparation. Mornings tend to be hectic - sleeping past the alarm, getting kids ready for school, and getting yourself out the door on time are a lot to handle. Of course, sitting down with a pencil and paper once a week to plan your week's breakfast menu would be an ideal way to approach the issue of bringing breakfast back into your family's morning. But, since NOT planning breakfast ahead is exactly the reason that Grab-n-Go is so appealing, the planning ahead concept must take on a slightly different meaning: not what you'll cook and when, but what you will keep on hand and what to do with it on the spur of the moment. Keeping a piece of paper on or near the refrigerator for jotting down items as you need them is a good idea.

Remember, you do not have to eat breakfast immediately when waking for the day. You and your family can Grab-n-Go anywhere - eat in the car, on the bus, at the School Breakfast Program, before first hour, or at your desk. For those days when you don't have breakfast before work or school, keep a few items at the office or in your kid's locker. No refrigeration is needed for fruit, peanut butter, raisins and nuts, crackers, granola bars, and ready-to-eat cereal. If you do have a refrigerator, take advantage of it, and keep an inventory on hand of yogurt, cheese or low-fat cottage cheese, juice, and milk. The secret to making breakfast fast and healthy for you and your family is to do what works best for YOU, keeping it simple and easy.

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# Important Nutrition Considerations for Teens



As children approach adolescence and young adulthood, they are less likely to consume enough of the daily recommendations for important vitamins and minerals. Teenagers who select their own breakfast frequently choose foods from only one or two food groups, or nothing at all. Unfortunately, a healthy lunch and dinner do not make up for a missed breakfast.

Teenagers need extra calories and nutrients to support their adolescent growth period that begins in girls at age 10 or 11, reaches its peak at age 12, and is completed around age 15. In boys, it begins at age 12 or 13, peaks at 14, and ends around age 19. An active female teen requires approximately 2,200 calories per day and an active male teen requires approximately 2,800 calories per day. Two nutrients that are typically short in a teenager's diet are calcium and iron. Iron is especially important with the onset of menstruation in girls and the increase in muscle tissue in boys. The recommended daily allowance (RDA) for iron is 12 to 15 milligrams (mg) a day for a teenager. Good sources of iron include meat, poultry, seafood, legumes/beans, enriched grains such as fortified breakfast cereals, breads, and granola bars, and some vegetables. Calcium is another key nutrient for teenage girls and boys due their growing bones. A teenager needs about 1,200 - 1,500 mg of calcium a day, which equals about four servings from the milk group.

Keep it simple. The ideal Grab-n-Go breakfast includes quick and easy selections from at least three of the five food groups from the Food Guide Pyramid to assure that important vitamin and mineral needs are being met. If you have a stubborn breakfast skipper in your house, get a promise from them that they'll Grab-n-Go in the car, on the bus, while they're walking to school, at their locker, or even between morning classes.

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# The School Breakfast Program



Breakfast literally means ‘breaking the fast’ and is thought by many to be the most important meal of the day. After a long night’s sleep, it’s critical to replenish our bodies every morning with a meal - but can breakfast actually help kids learn better? This notion dates back to the early 1900’s and research evidence says yes; skipping breakfast can diminish school performance. Breakfast skippers often experience headache, fatigue, sleepiness, and restlessness - do you think that you could learn under those circumstances? Kids who eat breakfast have improved memory and increased problem-solving skills, verbal fluency, and creative abilities.

Good nourishment doesn’t necessarily come in a fancy package or take long to prepare - even last night’s leftovers will give you and your family the healthy head start they need. For many children and teenagers who don’t eat at home, the School Breakfast Program serves breakfast to 6.6 million kids in more than 65,000 schools nationwide. Meals offered at school are available to ALL students. These meals must include several food groups and are designed to sustain students’ energy throughout the day. School breakfasts are economical as compared to home or commercial choices. They are also cost effective for schools, because they are supported by federal funds. Based on new research, eating school breakfast was even found to reduce tardiness, absenteeism, and visits to the nurse - good-bye headaches! Be sure to check out if your school offers a breakfast program. If you are an interested parent or community member, get involved and support the *Eat Healthy. Eat Breakfast.* effort in your schools.

- Encourage principals, superintendents, and school boards to support breakfast programs.
- Help establish a School Breakfast Program if one does not exist.
- Help to improve a School Breakfast Program if it needs a boost.
- Volunteer to help plan fun events and activities in your school that promote breakfast.

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# Healthy Breakfast Alternatives at Convenience Stores

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Breakfast is often called the most important meal of the day. It supplies much-needed energy after a night's sleep, and keeps your energy level from dropping before lunchtime. For people with busy schedules, making healthy choices can seem difficult. For example, extra-large muffins commonly sold at coffee shops and convenience stores can contain as many as 600-700 calories! When you're in a real pinch and need to rely on convenience stores, look to fresh fruit like bananas, apples and oranges, raisins or dried fruit with nuts, granola and fruit-filled bars, crackers with cheese or peanut butter, yogurt, fruit and vegetable juice, low-fat milk, flavored milk, health shakes (Boost, Carnation Instant Breakfast, Ensure, Nestle Sweet Success, Slimfast, and other varieties), or even ready-made sandwiches.

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# Getting Your Teen Involved



Skipping breakfast is a big mistake, but busy teens often do it. “I don’t have time,” “I’m not hungry,” “I’d rather sleep,” or “I hate breakfast food” are just a few of the excuses teens use to avoid eating in the morning. Breakfast skippers generally consume more fat, fewer essential vitamins and minerals, and less dietary fiber. Studies show that eating breakfast helps kids to be more alert and to learn better in school.

So how can you get your teenager interested in breakfast? Most teens love to shop so let them put their skills to work at the grocery store. Seventy-two percent of teens say they take part in meal preparation at least once a week and thirty-six percent say that they help shop for groceries. Why not try to sharpen your teens’ shopping skills? Ask them to make a list of Grab-n-Go breakfast items within a budget that you determine. This can give your teen a sense of responsibility and teaches them about budgeting. Teens love doing things with their friends too. Let them bring a friend to the store to see how many Grab-n-Go breakfast ideas they can generate that fit within the budget you gave them.

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