



Power breakfasts loaded with protein and fiber start school year right

By [Nanci Hellmich](#), USA TODAY Wednesday, August 10, 2011

The ABCs of a nutritious breakfast are now backed by science.



New research shows that you'll feel full longer and may get less hungry throughout the day if your first meal has protein-rich foods, such as eggs, Greek yogurt, low-fat dairy products or lean meat, and fiber-filled fare, such whole-wheat bread, whole-grain cereal, fruit and vegetables.

These foods appear to have more staying power than highly processed foods such as bagels, muffins, doughnuts and sugary cereals.

The findings are especially important for school-aged children who may be ravenous by lunch time if they don't eat a good breakfast.

"The evidence is pretty convincing that consuming more protein at breakfast will provide more appetite control for the rest of the day," says Heather Leidy, an assistant professor of nutrition at the [University of Missouri](#).

Her research shows that when teens eat a higher-protein breakfast, they have reduced feelings of hunger and increased fullness right away and that feeling of satiety continues throughout the day.

Leidy and her research staff performed functional MRIs on the teens' brains and found that a higher protein breakfast reduced the teens' motivation and drive to eat and made food look less rewarding and appealing.

Other studies show that students who eat breakfast do better on standardized tests and have improved cognitive function, attention spans and memory skills. Plus, kids who start the day with healthful fare are also likely to have consumed important nutrients such as calcium and vitamins, nutritionists say.

However, surveys show that between 30% to 60% of kids skip breakfast. Teens are more likely to miss it than younger children, Leidy says. And many of those who eat breakfast are consuming high-fat, high-sugar processed foods that have relatively no impact on satiety, she says.



In order to get the full benefits of the satiety from this kind of breakfast, the meal needs to be approximately 300-350 calories, Leidy says. Just grabbing a piece of fruit or granola bar is probably not enough to keep hunger at bay, she says.

Saul Loeb, AP

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The [Institute of Medicine](#) recommends a diet containing a range of 10% to 35% of calories from protein. The institute concluded that there is no clear evidence that high-protein intake increases the risk of kidney stones, osteoporosis, cancer, coronary artery disease and obesity.

Andrew Purcell

Yogurt can be served with diced fruit or toast for a power packed breakfast.

In addition to students, dieters also get a boost from a protein-packed breakfast. Studies show that protein helps dieters feel full longer, which may help them adhere to a program better, says Karen Miller-Kovach, chief scientific officer for [Weight Watchers](#), who reviewed the research on this topic when developing the company's PointsPlus System. She says one of her favorite breakfasts is a poached egg on whole-wheat toast and fresh fruit. "It leads to a productive hunger-free morning and helps me feel in control of my appetite for the rest of the day."

Andrew Purcell

Whole-wheat tortilla, toast or sandwich thin bread and cup egg beaters or egg whites make a healthy breakfast burrito.

From a practical point of view, that means if you have 100 calories of eggs at breakfast or the same calories in the form of a plain white bagel, chances are that several hours later you'll be less hungry if you had the eggs than if you had the bagel, she says.

If you want to last from breakfast to lunch without having your stomach rumbling and feeling like "you're so hungry that you're going to eat the kitchen sink," make sure your first meal of the day includes both protein and fiber, she says.

[Elizabeth Ward](#), a registered dietitian in Boston, mother of three and blogger at [food.usatoday.com](#), says kids who skip the morning meal often miss out on important vitamins and other nutrients that they don't make up for during the rest of the day.

"Breakfast is a prime opportunity for good nutrition, which is why it is a top priority for my family and me," she says. "I make sure the kids leave time for breakfast every day by minimizing the morning chaos, and by reducing distractions," she says.