

3 Reasons You Need Breakfast

The most important meal of the day? Only if you want a strong, fit body By: Brittany Risher

You have plenty of reasons to skip breakfast: You're sleep-deprived, you're too busy to make something, eating first thing in the morning unsettles your stomach.

Enough of the excuses: Breakfast is key if you want to slim down, add muscle, and succeed at work.

More Muscle

If you want a lean, muscular body, you can't skip breakfast. Since your tank is empty, your body is highly receptive to nutrients—so fill up with the right ones to jumpstart protein synthesis and muscle building.

In the AM, your body is in a state similar to the one you reach post-workout, Aragon says. "Muscle protein synthesis is low in the morning, so if you can spark that, you're contributing to your overall goal of maintaining or gaining muscle tissue." And more muscle means you burn more calories throughout the day.

A mix of protein (such as yogurt) and a small amount of carbohydrates (a piece of fruit) will give your muscles energy and help you maintain what you've worked so hard to achieve.

Less Fat

Eating in the morning makes you less likely to overeat during the day since your blood sugar will remain steady—as long as you don't overdose on carbohydrates. Another reason to favor protein and fat: You'll boost your metabolism and feel fuller longer—meaning you'll stay away from the snack machine.

But breakfast does more than just prevent a grumbling stomach during your morning meeting. "When people skip breakfast, their levels of insulin, a hormone that stores fat, rise at the next meal they eat," says Jonny Bowden, Ph.D., C.N.S., a nutritionist in Los Angeles. Have something to eat, and you'll keep insulin levels low so you burn fat instead.

Why not make some eggs? In a study in the *International Journal of Obesity*, men on reduced-calorie diets ate either two eggs or a bagel for breakfast. Although both meals contained the same number of calories, those who ate eggs *lost 65 percent more weight after 8 weeks*.

Better Concentration and Productivity

While cereal companies have funded most of the studies on breakfast's impact on students' academic performance, a morning meal is good for your brain. Several other studies show the regular consumption of breakfast improves performance, attention, and concentration.

Think about it: You've fasted all night long—your brain needs fuel to comprehend all those spreadsheets and red-flagged e-mails your boss sends. But a bowl of Reese's Puffs isn't the best thing to grab. Anything that tastes like dessert will only lead to a sugar rush—and then a crash. And who needs that at 10 a.m.? If you want cereal, stick with muesli, Bowden says. Try it with yogurt, berries, and nuts for a great mix of protein, fats, and carbs.