

# Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

## Encourage your child to eat a healthy breakfast

**It's always a struggle to get my children to eat a good breakfast before school. How can I make them get up early enough to be sure they start the day right?**

Breakfast is important for kids heading to the classroom: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics advises that regularly eating a nutrient-rich breakfast helps children in several ways, including improving school performance and helping with maintaining a healthy weight. A good breakfast — something that provides a variety of nutrient-rich foods — provides nourishment for both muscle power and brain power.

Eating a healthy breakfast doesn't have to take a lot of time. Here are some ideas to help make sure the kids don't skip out without fueling up first, courtesy of nutrition experts with various organizations, including the dietetics academy, the Food and Drug Administration, and eXtension.org, which is the online outreach presence of the nation's land-grant university system:

- Prepare the night before. Put breakfast cereal and bowls on the table or peanut butter and whole-grain bread on the counter to make breakfast easy to prepare.
- Have easy-to-handle fruit available on the counter or in the refrigerator to eat on the way out the door. Bananas, apples, peaches, pears and plums are all easy to grab and go. Younger kids are even more likely to eat bite-size pieces of fruit. Try putting some slices of fruit in a small plastic bag to go.
- Be sure to have plenty of healthful options on hand. Buy breakfast cereals or cereal bars made with whole grains and with 8 grams or less of sugar per serving. Choose nonfat or low-fat



photo: liquidlibrary

milk, yogurt and cheese, and whole-grain bread, English muffins and tortillas.

- Leave your blender on the counter to make easy breakfast shakes. Combine frozen berries, milk or yogurt, and even some protein powder — or come up with your own recipe — and blend them together for a quick and filling morning treat.
- Make breakfast wraps using whole-wheat tortillas filled with low-fat cheese and apple slices or peanut butter and banana slices.
- Think outside the breakfast box. Nontraditional foods work just as well as scrambled eggs to fuel the body. Offer your kids string cheese, a handful of nuts or trail mix, tuna salad, leftover chicken breast, a peanut butter sandwich, or whole-wheat crackers with low-fat cheese.
- Be a role model. If your kids see that you're in too much of a rush and skip breakfast more often than not, then they will, too.

If you haven't already, you should also check out your children's school's breakfast program. These days, more than 90 percent of schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program also offer breakfast, and in the last few years, new breakfast standards regarding whole grain-rich foods, calories, trans fats, sodium and other dietary considerations have gone into effect. If an at-home breakfast truly isn't in the cards at your house, it's likely a healthy breakfast at school is an option.

Sept. 4, 2015

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**Editor:** This column was reviewed by Carol Smathers, Ohio State University Extension specialist in Youth Nutrition and Wellness.

*Chow Line is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*

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