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**2014 9.16 Health Matters**  
**Why Breakfast?**

This is Health Matters, with some answers to the question, "*Why eat breakfast?*"

Breakfast gets us moving. That's one good reason for eating it, but not same way coffee does.

Drinking coffee wakes us up, and that's okay, but if coffee and a piece of toast or a muffin or a pastry are all you have before you set out to conquer another day... your body is being dragged down a path you want to avoid, and here's why.

When you skip breakfast - and we're talking a balanced meal of protein, fruits and/or vegetables and grains, the clocks regulating your body systems are set to go off at the wrong time, ringing in appetites you don't need and health impacts you don't want.

After a night of no food, the body is hungry. Even if *you* don't feel hungry, *your body* needs nutrients. If you don't prime your body with what it needs after its nightly fast, its systems start to go haywire, And they go haywire in very specific ways. For example, the unprimed body starts to alter blood sugar levels. Breakfast skippers have bigger spikes and drops in their blood sugar levels. Breakfast eaters prime their metabolism to maintain stable glucose levels, even after subsequent meals.

*Subsequent* meals you may ask? The answer is yes! Breakfast eaters maintain stable blood sugar levels *all day long*, but breakfast skippers experience a major blood sugar spike after lunch. Over time, that after-lunch spike has enduring consequences. Unstable blood sugar levels mean trouble. Stable blood sugar levels are key to keeping body systems in sync and in tune.

Many studies support this conclusion. One study, which involved almost 27,000 men, found that those who didn't eat breakfast were 27% more likely to develop heart disease. Further, the breakfast skippers gained weight. The reason for weight gain was simple. Breakfast skippers overate at other meals.

And as we know, excessive weight gain leads to heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol and blood pressure. In a similar study of 30,000, the breakfast skippers, even if they only skipped a few times a week, were more likely to develop diabetes 2 than those who ate breakfast regularly. Another thing, People who eat breakfast regularly are more physically active during the morning. This may be due to a temporary increase in blood sugar, which gives more energy. But, this temporary increase in blood sugar is well within the normal range, it's not a spike. And, the fact that the breakfast eaters were more active may be one reason why they didn't gain weight even if they consumed more calories during the rest of the day.

Over 100 studies have linked eating breakfast with a reduced risk of obesity. At least one study found that overweight people on a diet who ate more calories at breakfast than at dinner lost more weight than dieters who skipped breakfast and ate larger evening meals.

Most people consume about 50 to 60 percent of their total daily protein at dinner. Shifting those calories to the morning is beneficial. For one thing, the concentrated protein leaves you with a feeling of fullness, so you have less food cravings later on. Also, the body gets the energy when it needs it, building muscle mass rather than storing it as fat while you sleep.

Research has found that breakfast eaters reap mental benefits as well - in adults and children. Breakfast eaters are better able to remember, pay attention, process information rapidly, and reason. They also exhibit strong learning, creative and verbal abilities. The researchers concluded that the mental benefits gained from eating breakfast are likely a function of the stable glucose levels breakfast provides. The brain needs a steady supply of glucose.

Breakfast doesn't have to be a bowl of cereal or pancakes with syrup. While eggs are a great source of protein, breakfast can be a hearty soup, grilled chicken with vegetables or even steak kababs.

America's breakfast foods are largely packaged, processed goods, which means they are high in sugar, salt and fat - and low in nutrition. The Vietnamese eat fish soup, the Germans, sausage or ham steaks. Eating a balanced breakfast can become a new approach to thinking out of the box.

Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA. Produced and written by Cynthia Poten.

Engineered by Joseph Orozco. Our readers were Jay Renzuli and Joseph Orozco. For this audio and more information, visit our download area at [www.kidefm.org](http://www.kidefm.org). Thank you for listening.

***Sources and Links***

***Breakfast Matters, p. 18, Consumer Reports, October 2014.***

***<http://www.webmd.com/diet/features/many-benefits-breakfast>***

***<https://www.fatsecret.com/calories-nutrition/food/breakfast-items>***

***<http://nutritionfacts.org/video/a-better-breakfast/>***