



Breakfast....Fuel for the whole Family

Mom was right; breakfast is the most important meal of the day! Breakfast fuels your muscles for activity, increases your productivity and increases the rate you burn calories. It also decreases the rate you store calories in your fat cells. It has been discovered that people who skip breakfast have a harder time losing weight, take in more calories during the day and have higher blood cholesterol which in turn increases their risk for heart disease. Most people skip breakfast due to lack of time to eat in the morning or perceived lack of appetite. However, the body has just been trained to think it is not hungry. The reality is, your body needs breakfast to get your metabolism going again after a night of sleep.

The importance of breakfast is even more profound for children. Multiple studies have shown that children who eat breakfast do better in school. Yet 20% of children and 31% of adolescents skip breakfast every day. A study by the Food and Action Research Center shows students who eat breakfast:

1. Have improved academic performance with higher test scores and grades
2. Have better concentration and focus so an increased ability to learn
3. Have fewer behavior issues including hyperactivity and getting along with peers
4. Have a lower incidence of childhood obesity

But not all breakfasts are created equal. Specific nutrients, if eaten at breakfast time, will fuel the body for success at the workplace, in school or on the track. Iron, protein, complex carbohydrates and calcium are all key nutrients found in well-balanced breakfast choices like oatmeal, whole grain waffles with peanut butter or yogurt with fruit. Breakfast that just contains sugar and fat like doughnuts, toaster pastries, croissants and high sugar cereals actually affect behavior poorly and lead to less success with poor behavior, lack of energy and an inability to think clearly.

An ideal breakfast for maximum efficiency and energy has a balanced combination of protein, carbohydrates and fiber. Quick breakfast options can easily be found between your pantry, freezer and refrigerator with whole grain cereals and oatmeal, dried fruit and nuts, cereal bars with protein, 1% or fat-free milk and cheese, fresh fruit, reheated veggie pizza leftovers and frozen whole grain waffles. However sometimes it is necessary to have breakfast on the go. McDonald's now offers three great breakfast options that not only will provide the energy an adult or child needs

to get their day started but also provides the iron, complex carbohydrates, protein and calcium necessary for academic and workplace success.

McDonald's Fruit and Yogurt Parfait with Granola made with low-fat vanilla yogurt, low fat granola, and real strawberries and blueberries provides 160 calories with only 2 grams of fat, 31 grams of carbohydrates, 4 grams of protein, and 1 gram of fiber. Additionally, the yogurt parfait provides 150 mg of Calcium that helps to keep your bones strong as you stimulate your morning muscles.

McDonald's Fruit and Maple Oatmeal made with whole grain oats, red and green apples, raisins and craisins and brown sugar (optional) is another perfect breakfast on the run especially when paired with McDonald's low-fat white or fat-free chocolate milk. Together they are only 390 calories, 2 servings of whole grains, a serving of dairy and a great source of calcium, fiber, iron, Vitamin A and Vitamin C.

The third great breakfast option on the run has been on the McDonald's menu since 1972. The Egg McMuffin is made with fresh cracked Grade A eggs, extra lean Canadian bacon, American cheese on a toasted English muffin. At only 300 calories it is an excellent source of complex carbohydrates and lean protein and provides 30% of the RDA for calcium and 20% of the RDA for iron.

Extensive nutritional information is now available in restaurants and online (www.mcdonalds.com), on the go (McDonald's mobile application is available for the Smartphone) and on the phone (1-800-244-6227).

Shaye Arluk, MS RD HFI is McDonald's Nutritional Consultant in Virginia. She works with them to help customers, specifically families, make nutrition minded choices whether visiting McDonald's or elsewhere. In 2011 McDonald's launched its Commitments to Offer Improved Nutritional Choices, a nationwide program working to provide more lower calorie and lower sodium menu choices, more access to nutritional information, and focusing on children's well-being.