

5 Ways Kids Who Eat Breakfast Excel

How many times have you heard, "breakfast is the most important meal of the day"? Here's why, in terms of small-fry. Kids who eat breakfast...

1. Do better in school
2. Have more focus and concentration, more energy, and better eye-hand coordination
3. Have fewer behavioral problems
4. Are more likely to meet their nutritional needs overall
5. Have an easier time staying at a healthy weight

"Mornings can be hectic in any family, and getting kids-much less adults-to eat something can be a challenge. But just look at the payoffs!" says pediatrician Jennifer Trachtenberg, MD, mom of three and proud author of her first book, the new, super-useful *Good Kids, Bad Habits: The RealAge Guide to Raising Healthy Children*.

"So if you can't make the morning meal happen at home, send kids off with healthy on-the-go breakfasts to eat on the way," says Dr. Jen. "The night before, have them help you fill plastic zipper bags with things like nuts, raisins, and O's cereal; orange slices; low-fat granola; cheese and crackers; sliced apple 'sandwich cookies' filled with peanut butter...or anything else reasonably healthy that you know they'll eat, whether it's 'breakfast food' or not. A chicken sandwich on whole wheat? Fine."

Just aim for three things:

1. **Plenty of fiber and protein** - it will keep kids full and energized until lunch.
2. **Minimal sugar** - too much can send their energy soaring up, then crashing down before the morning's half over.
3. **Some healthy fat**, especially the kind called omega-3s - turns out that kids who eat more of them do better on short-term memory tests (and ace pop quizzes!) than kids who eat more saturated fat (think butter, bacon, sausage, pastries, full-fat milk and cheese). One easy way to get good omega-3 fats into your kids: sprinkle walnuts or almonds on their cereal. Another: Hard-boil a batch of omega-3-enriched eggs, which are widely available now. On a high-speed morning, give the kids (yourself too) an egg and some whole-wheat crackers in a plastic zipper bag. You'll all be good to go till lunch.

THERE'S NOTHING OLD-FASHIONED ABOUT OATMEAL

In fact, there's growing evidence that it may be an ideal way to start the schoolday. Kids who eat oatmeal for breakfast-versus cold cereal or nothing at all-remember things better and pay more attention, handy for, say, studying math and geography. One reason may be that oatmeal is digested slowly, supplying the brain with a steady stream of energy.

For more, check out:

Good Kids, Bad Habits: The RealAge Guide to Raising Healthy Children
<http://www.realage.com/parentingcenter/entry.aspx>