

Make time for breakfast

It's not called the most important meal of the day for no reason.

By Dr ZAWIAH HASHIM & Dr CHIN YIT SIEW

It should come as no surprise to learn that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. After all, it is a good habit to develop if you want to make a positive health difference in your life.

A healthy breakfast has many positive long-term health effects such as reducing the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes mellitus.

In fact, studies show that while taking a healthy breakfast is important for everyone, it is especially crucial for children as it will help them perform better academically, with better focus and concentration.

Breakfast benefits

Breakfast replenishes the body with energy and vital nutrients after a night of sleep, thus boosting energy levels and giving your metabolism a jump-start for an active day.

This is more crucial for children as their bodies continue growing while they sleep, and they often wake up with most of their energy used up.

Breakfast is the best way for them to get a quick energy boost while simultaneously leading to a higher intake of essential nutrients.

For students, skipping a proper breakfast may mean not being at their best for learning, and their concentration levels will also suffer. Since focus and attention are important, ensuring that you get a proper breakfast means better alertness levels.

Additionally, having a healthy breakfast also helps you to reduce snacking and overeating later in the day. This will help you reduce excessive calorie intake.

Beating the breakfast 'rush hour'

The most common problem everyone faces in the morning is time, or rather the lack of it. However, don't let this stop you from getting a healthy breakfast.

The important thing is to do a little planning in advance. Spend some time to make sure that all your breakfast items are on your list before you go grocery shopping as this helps to ensure that your pantry is always stocked with the necessary ingredients for a quick breakfast.

Examples of quick-and-easy healthy breakfast foods include combinations of the following: wholegrain breakfast cereals or oats; milk, yogurt, soya bean milk or malted drink; wholemeal bread, buns, eggs, or fresh fruits such as banana and apple.

There are numerous recipes you can try out using the various food items mentioned above. The best part is you can even pack the food and bring it with you.



Breakfast is the best way to get a quick energy boost while simultaneously leading to a higher intake of essential nutrients. — AFP

Start preparing early

If you would like to have a more elaborate breakfast, you can always prepare it the night before.

With a little early preparation and planning, you can get all the ingredients for a fantastic breakfast ready for you to put together in the morning.

For instance, you could make a healthy sandwich with wholemeal bread, sliced vegetables (eg lettuce, onions or tomatoes), sliced hard-boiled eggs, cooked chicken slices, and cheese.

Once you have assembled your sandwich, keep in the refrigerator. In the morning, you can grab your sandwich and add any condiments (eg mayonnaise, mustard, chilli sauce, etc) before you head out the door.

If you prefer to eat your sandwich warm, simply pop it into a microwave for a minute or so.

If you prefer to go with a more traditional breakfast, you can opt for *roti bakar*, *telur rebus* or steamed bun. During weekends, you can even make your own healthier version of *nasi lemak*!

Another option is to cook extra portions the day before. You can then pre-pack them to make it easier to prepare and consume the next day.

All you need to do is just take a few minutes to reheat the foods. Any leftover foods from earlier meals can similarly be kept in the refrigerator and made into breakfast in the same manner.

Alternatively, you may opt to pack some fruits and yoghurt or packaged nutritious beverages



In order to ensure that children will form the habit of eating breakfast, parents should make the effort to set a good example, so eat breakfast! — AFP

such as milk, soya bean milk and malted drink as your breakfast on-the-go.

This way, your breakfast will be waiting for you in the fridge and you will not have to worry about missing breakfast or eating unhealthy foods outside.

Setting a good example

Never skip breakfast! If you have children or adolescents in the family, bear in mind that you are their role model. If you consistently skip breakfast, you are sending them the message that breakfast is unimportant.

In order to ensure that they will

form the habit of eating breakfast, you should make the effort to set a good example.

Let them see you enjoying your breakfast every day, even if it's something as simple and basic as half-boiled eggs, a piece of wholemeal bread and a cup of nutritious beverage such as milk, chocolate malt drink or fresh fruit juice.

If you can get them involved in making their own breakfasts, then the whole morning routine will be even more meaningful.

Dr Zawiah Hashim and Dr Chin Yit Siew are members of the Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity. This article is con-

tributed by Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM) 2016, an annual community nutrition education initiative jointly organised by the Nutrition Society of Malaysia, Malaysian Dietitians' Association and Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity. Nestle Products Sdn Bhd. supports the NMM 2016 programme. To obtain more information on healthy eating and active lifestyle, visit NMM's Food-Fit-Fun Fair at Ground Floor, Centre Court Concourse, 1 Utama Shopping Centre on Wednesday to Sunday, April 6-10, 2016. Visit www.nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my or Nutrition Month Malaysia Facebook page for more info.