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## Top 5 Common Breakfast Mistakes

By Andrea Holwegner BSc, RD

Health advocates often say breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It is also the meal that often gets the least attention. Here are the top 5 common breakfast mistakes we see in our practice:

### 1. Skipping or delaying breakfast

Breakfast means “break the fast.” You need food to help your body burn energy efficiently throughout the day. Breakfast is essential to maximize productivity, energy and a healthy weight. If you can’t stop munching all evening, the first question you should ask yourself is, “Did I have a balanced breakfast?” If you skip breakfast and try to rely on willpower to control overeating in the evening, you will likely fail. From a psychological standpoint, if you skip breakfast you may also be justifying overeating in the evening. This “starve early, binge later” mindset does not help you manage a healthy weight and can create an unhealthy relationship with food.



### 2. Running on coffee alone

Make a deal with yourself that you can’t have your morning brew until you have eaten. This strategy has switched many of my clients from frequent breakfast skippers to avid breakfast eaters. Coffee provides a false sense of energy, adds to nausea and may mask feelings of hunger.

### 3. Missing carbohydrates

Carbohydrates from foods such as grains, starches and fruit are essential for key vitamins, minerals and fibre. Carbohydrates are also important for energy for your muscles and provide the exclusive fuel source for your brain. Without them, you will likely feel tired and unfocused, and experience negative mood changes.

To illustrate this, assess how you feel later in the day on a breakfast with a vegetable omelette versus the same vegetable omelette with toast or oatmeal. Note the difference between fullness and satisfaction. Protein provides fullness and prolonged satiety while carbohydrates provide satisfaction for your brain.

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#### 4. Not having enough protein

A meal such as oatmeal and fruit or toast and juice is a good start, but without protein-rich food the meal will not sustain you for much longer than an hour or two. Protein-rich foods such as nuts, eggs or meat will provide you with longer satiety and energy.

Note that dairy foods such as milk, yogurt and cheese, as well as soy milk, are also good sources of protein. Did you know one cup (250 mL) of milk (as well as most soy milks) supplies nine grams of protein, while an egg has six grams of protein?

#### 5. Frustration with failure

While some people are able to make a change and commit to it 100 per cent, the majority of people find that as soon as life gets busy or stressful, the new change is difficult to maintain.

Why not set a goal that challenges you to feel positive and succeed?

If you often skip breakfast start with a commitment to having one meal choice you enjoy and nailing breakfast three days this week. Once you get going, you can work on variety and commit to a daily habit.

#### Tasty ideas

1. Yogurt parfait with yogurt, fresh or frozen berries and granola
2. Oatmeal with dried fruit, nuts and milk or soy milk.
3. Reduced-fat bran muffin with cheese or cottage cheese and a pear.
4. Granola bar and a smoothie with fruit, yogurt and unsweetened juice.
5. Whole grain toast with scrambled eggs mixed with ham, red peppers and green onions.
6. High-fibre breakfast cereal with milk or soy milk and a grapefruit or apple.
7. Leftover pasta with tomato meat sauce and a glass of unsweetened juice.
8. Whole grain tortilla wrap with nut butter rolled around a banana.
9. Latte or tea latte and a snack bag of dried cereal, dried fruit and nuts.
10. Unsweetened applesauce or orange as well as a toasted open faced cheese bun with sliced tomatoes.

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## Brekkie score

Want to determine if you are choosing a balanced breakfast? Score yourself two points for each of the below items (maximum score is 10 points).

- Ate within one hour of waking.
- Included grains or starchy foods (such as toast, cereal, pasta or rice)
- Included fruit and/or vegetables (such as fresh fruit, dried fruit, canned fruit, unsweetened juice, vegetables or vegetable juice).
- Included a source of protein (such as nuts, nut butter, eggs, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, milk, soy milk, protein powder, meat, poultry or seafood).
- The meal size was enough to keep you energized and full for three to five hours.

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