

... JUNE 2010 ...

QUICK TAKES

BREAKFAST TIPS

Looking for some quick, healthy breakfast ideas? Try one of these:

- Scoop low-fat, calcium-fortified cottage cheese into a cantaloupe or honeydew melon half.
- Stuff a 6-inch whole-wheat pita with scrambled egg whites (or egg substitute) and salsa. Serve with 1/2 pink grapefruit or other fresh fruit.
- Layer fat-free yogurt and berries over one prepared whole-grain waffle (from frozen).
- Melt one slice (1 oz.) low-fat Swiss or cheddar cheese over sliced tomato on a whole-wheat English muffin. Enjoy 1 medium fresh fruit of your choice on the side.



Healthy Upgrades for Breakfast

It's 7 a.m. -- do you know what's in your breakfast? Many of us start the day with a sugary cereal or a muffin full of bad fats or a calorie-laden bagel too plump to even fit in the toaster.

But with a few small changes, you can make big-time improvements. Your goal at breakfast should be to get calcium, dietary fiber and vitamin C -- nutrients that can be harder to find at other meals.

Here's a look at some common breakfast items and how you can upgrade them without much hassle.

Breakfast at the Table

OJ Plus! For an effortless upgrade from regular orange juice, switch to 100 percent juice fortified with calcium and vitamin D. You'll get 35 percent of your daily calcium and 120 percent of your daily vitamin C in an 8-ounce glass.

Bold Choices for Cold Cereals! When you're choosing a cold cereal, remember to get your fiber! A bowl of corn flakes or rice crisps might sound healthy, but there's only 1 gram of dietary fiber in a cup. Easy-to-find upgrades include General Mills Wheat Chex (5 grams fiber), Post Shredded Wheat and Bran (8 grams fiber), Kashi GoLEAN (10 grams fiber) or Uncle Sam's Cereal (10 grams fiber). If you can't quit your favorite low-fiber brand, try combining it with a high-fiber option. You might enjoy the taste! Also, be sure to have your cereal with nonfat or low-fat milk instead of whole milk, or try soy milk. With all packaged cereals, look to the Nutrition Facts panel printed on the back, not the health claims displayed on the front.



Some Like It Hot! Hot oatmeal is a great way to get heart-healthy soluble fiber into your diet. Instant brands are convenient, but beware of variety packs that are loaded with added sugar. Quick oatmeal has a little more soluble fiber and cooks in just one minute. Prepare 1 cup cooked and top with fresh or dried fruits as you wish, and you'll easily meet your soluble fiber quota for the day.

Leggo Your Eggos! Many frozen waffles use refined wheat flour (with only 3 grams fiber for two waffles) and have unhealthy trans fat. There are better options out there for waffle-lovers. Go with Van's 97 percent fat-free or multigrain varieties to avoid the trans fat and get 5 grams fiber per serving. Another trans-fat free option is Kashi-GoLEAN waffles with 6 grams fiber and a few extra grams of protein.

Are Eggs Healthy? Sure, as long as you don't load them up with fat! Eggs can be a great way to get some cheap high-quality protein into your diet, providing 5.5 grams of protein in one egg for only 68 calories. Although eggs do have a significant amount of cholesterol, research has shown that dietary cholesterol has only a small effect on blood cholesterol. Unfortunately, frying them in butter and adding cheese will add lots of saturated fat. Scramble in a good nonstick skillet and throw in some leftover veggies to add some more nutrients and fiber.

Healthy Upgrades for Breakfast

Running Out the Door

Nutrition Bar Buyers Beware!

Despite the healthy-sounding name, many breakfast bars are nutritionally no better than white bread and jelly. Quaker Oatmeal Breakfast Squares do offer 3 grams fiber but they're somewhat high in sugar and contain partially hydrogenated oils. Grab an Odwalla Bar (4 grams fiber) or a Luna bar (3 grams fiber) for a significant nutrition upgrade. If you prefer something warm, pop an Amy's Breakfast burrito in the microwave: it has 5 grams fiber and will meet 20 percent of your daily iron needs.



I Can't Believe How Many Calories Are In My Yogurt!

An 8-ounce container of sweetened, fruit-on-the-bottom, full-fat yogurt has about 240 calories and 4 grams of fat. Try this easy upgrade: Stir 1/2 cup fresh or frozen unsweetened berries and 2 tablespoons almonds or other nuts into 1 cup plain nonfat yogurt. You'll eliminate the saturated fat, and be able to enjoy good fruit flavor along with 3 grams of fiber.

Buying On the Outside

The Early Morning Drive-thru

Fast-food franchises offer speed and convenience. And, while they're not always cheap depending on what you choose, they can offer good value. Fast-food restaurants have made efforts in recent years to offer some more nutritious options. Unfortunately, many people are still tempted by the higher-fat, higher-calorie choices.

If you know you'll be picking up a to-go breakfast, check out the restaurant's website the night before. Look for lower-calorie breakfast menu items with no more than 15 grams total fat and less than 800 mg sodium.

And don't make a fast-food breakfast your daily routine.

Coffee Calorie Count

Do you start your morning with a stop at the coffee shop? Remember that whole milk or cream will add unwanted fat and calories. A 16-ounce latte made with whole milk has 260 calories and 14 grams of fat. (Remember too, that every packet of sugar you stir in adds another 16 calories.) To save 100 calories and cut the fat altogether, insist on fat-free milk for your next coffee. Over the course of the workweek, you'll consume 500 fewer calories and will still be getting 50 percent of your daily calcium.

Homemade Granola Makes 5 cups for 10 1/2-cup servings

Tired of spending \$6 for a 10-ounce bag of granola? Why not make your own? It's easy and it puts you in control of the ingredients. The trick is to use old-fashioned -- not quick or instant -- rolled oats and to bake the granola slowly in a low oven. This homemade granola will keep for two weeks when stored in an airtight container.

Ingredients

2/3 cup toasted wheat germ
2/3 cup sliced almonds
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup pure maple syrup
1/4 cup apple or orange juice
1 tablespoon canola oil
A pinch of salt
2/3 cup raisins and/or dried cranberries
1 tablespoon sugar

Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 275 degrees. Line a large baking sheet with sides with parchment paper.
2. Combine oats, wheat germ, almonds and cinnamon in a mixing bowl. In a small saucepan, heat maple syrup, juice, oil and salt briefly until steaming. Drizzle the liquid over the oat mixture and stir to combine. Working with a handful at a time, squeeze some of the cereal to form small clusters.
3. Spread the granola on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes, stirring the mixture once or twice. Add dried fruit and sugar and bake about 15 minutes longer, until the granola is golden brown.
4. Let the granola cool completely before storing in an airtight container.



Nutritional info / serving

per 1/2-cup serving
Calories: 215
Protein: 8 g
Total Fat: 6.4 g
Sat Fat: 1.2 g
Trans Fat: 0 g
Carbohydrate: 32 g
Fiber: 4.5 g
Sodium: 16 mg