

### The importance of breakfast

Breakfast literally means "Breaking the Fast". For some people, especially younger children, the overnight fast can last as long as 16 hours. Britain has the worst breakfast habits in Europe - over 11 million people miss out on breakfast almost a third of the time, compared to the Spanish who eat breakfast on 93% of mornings<sup>1</sup>.

Young adults (aged 17-24 years) are Britain's biggest breakfast skippers, 2 - 30 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women don't eat breakfast. This differs to those at either end of the age spectrum - only 9 per cent of children under 5 years old and 3.5 per cent of the over 65's skip breakfast.

The body needs breakfast. First thing in the morning, the body is low on energy reserves and needs fuel, in the form of food, to get going. Nutritionists recommend that breakfast should provide 25 percent of the daily nutrient requirements. Studies have shown that people who skip breakfast miss out on many vital nutrients, which they are unlikely to make-up for during the rest of the day<sup>3</sup>. Missing breakfast can have a negative effect on general health, both in the short and long term

### Breakfast is good for the brain

The influence of breakfast on mental performance has been the subject of much research, especially amongst children. It was found that children who skip breakfast were not as efficient in the selection of critical information in problem-solving as those who had eaten breakfast<sup>4</sup>. Eating breakfast helps children to perform better in school, in both mathematical and creative tasks<sup>5</sup>.

This is thought to be due to the fact that breakfast, especially if it is high in carbohydrate, provides glucose – the preferred fuel of the brain<sup>6</sup>. Teachers are well aware of the benefits of breakfast in that hungry children do not learn. Adults have also been found to benefit from eating breakfast. In a series of memory and recall tests, it was found that eating breakfast significantly improved performance at information retention tasks. Recollection speed was also enhanced<sup>6</sup>.

### Breakfast cereal eaters are healthier

Research confirms that both adult and child breakfast cereal eaters have healthier diets:

- **Consistent energy intake:** breakfast cereal eaters are 2.5 times more likely to meet the recommended intake of 25% of nutrients at breakfast than non-cereal eaters<sup>9,10</sup>.
- **Better Nutrition:** according to studies in the UK, France, Ireland & Spain, breakfast cereal eaters have higher carbohydrate and lower fat intakes – in line with dietary recommendations, and are more likely to have a better micronutrient status<sup>10,11,12,13</sup>.
- **Lower Body Mass Index:** studies across the globe have found that both children and adults who eat a cereal breakfast are leaner than their counterparts<sup>9,12,14,15,16</sup>.
- **Lower Blood Cholesterol Levels:** several studies have found consumers of cereals to have lower cholesterol levels than non-consumers<sup>10,11,17</sup>.
- **Higher Fibre Intakes:** breakfast cereal eaters are more likely to achieve the recommended intake of fibre<sup>9, 10,13</sup>.
- **Greater milk consumption:** Teenagers and adults who eat breakfast cereals regularly consume more milk at breakfast than non-breakfast eaters<sup>18</sup>. Eating cereals with milk is an effective way to increase calcium intake<sup>18,19</sup>.
- **Less susceptibility to illness:** Links have been found between eating breakfast and reducing both mortality and susceptibility to physical illness<sup>20</sup>, including the common cold<sup>21</sup>.

### Breakfast is good for the brain

As well as claiming a lack of time in the morning, attempting to lose weight is one of the most common reasons given for missing breakfast. However, evidence suggests that skipping breakfast results in the opposite - making it harder to lose weight and keep it off. Eating breakfast helps to balance food intake throughout the day, making overeating less likely. Research also shows that both children and adults who eat breakfast, particularly a cereal one, are less likely to be overweight than their counterparts who skip this meal<sup>15,16</sup>.

### Breakfast eaters are happier

It's true! A high carbohydrate cereal breakfast can positively influence one's morning mood. Scientific research supports this, demonstrating that breakfast eaters are less stressed than those who skip it<sup>22</sup>.

Research has also shown that eating high-fibre breakfast cereals (such as **Kellogg's All-Bran** or **Bran Flakes**) can help combat fatigue and improve mood<sup>23</sup>. Taking as little as five minutes to relax and prepare for the day with a bowl of cereal and milk really ensures a positive start.

### What is the ideal breakfast?

Breakfast cereals fit the recommendations made by nutrition experts for healthy eating because they are:

- Low in fat – fitting in well with a weight control programme and aiding a healthy heart
- High in carbohydrate – providing an energy boost for both the body and the brain
- Often high-fibre – helping healthy digestion and reduce feelings of fatigue
- Fortified with vitamins and minerals – providing at least 25 per cent of daily requirements for essential vitamins and 17 per cent of iron
- Eaten with milk – helping to ensure adequate calcium intake
- And a tasty and delicious way to start the day right.

continued overleaf...

## Benefits of Breakfast

- 1 Datamonitor 'Changing Mealtimes', May 2002
- 2 Family Food Panel, Individual Meal Occasions Spring/Autumn 2002
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