

- Breakfasts**Breakfast baddies****Discovers the worst early-morning food choices you can make**

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WITH our busy lives, many of us skip breakfast but what you pick for your first meal of the day is important. If you're opting for any of the following, it might be time to give your breakfast an upgrade.

**Croissant with jam**

If a buttery croissant is your daily morning habit then you might want to reconsider. "This combination is mostly refined carbohydrates with added sugar and doesn't offer much protein or fibre," says Nichola Ludlam-Raine, a registered dietitian and author of *How Not To Eat Ultra-Processed*.

Mark Gilbert, nutritionist for *The 1:1 Diet* adds: "Protein is king when it comes to managing your appetite and revving up your metabolism, which allows you to hold on to more lean muscle, while keeping fat at bay."

This is called the thermic effect, and research has found protein is much better at it than fat or carbs with around 25% of protein's calories going towards digesting, absorbing, and storing nutrients from food.

A plain croissant also contains high amounts of saturated fat, too much of which can increase levels of bad cholesterol.

Instead of a croissant, Nichola suggests cheese and tomato on toast, or a mini croissant with a fruit salad plus yoghurt with seeds.

Just coffee

Nichola says while a black coffee is low in calories and is a quick energy boost from caffeine: "black coffee offers no essential nutrients". "Coffee on an empty stomach may also irritate the stomach lining, potentially leading to acid reflux or discomfort."

Sweetened coffees, such as flavoured lattes, can pack in serious sugar and calories without providing lasting satiety or nutrition.

"This can lead to a rapid spike and crash in blood sugar levels, leaving you feeling fatigued or hungry shortly after," says Nichola.

The recommended daily free sugar (sugars added to food or drinks and found naturally in honey and syrups and fruit juices) intake for adults is 30g, yet a Starbucks Grande Caramel Frappuccino, for example, contains 362 calories and a staggering 44g of sugar, while a large Costa Latte with caramel has 348 calories and 32g of sugar.

A bacon sandwich

The NHS says eating too much processed meat such as bacon or sausages, “probably increases your risk of bowel (colorectal) cancer” and increases your risk of high blood pressure thanks to high levels of salt. Instead of bacon, Nichola suggests eggs or smoked salmon.

With bacon, Nichola adds: “enjoy only occasionally – less than 70g a day as per NHS advice – and pair with veg and wholegrain bread to add fibre and nutrients.”

A bowl of cereal

Nichola warns that sugary cereals, such as frosted flakes or chocolate options, should only be eaten occasionally. Excessive sugar intake has been linked to weight gain, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

“Go for high-fibre, low-sugar cereal options such as porridge oats, bran flakes, shredded wheat or no added-sugar muesli. These provide slow-release energy and the fibre supports digestion,” says Nichola. “Adding protein such as Greek yoghurt or milk, and healthy fats such as nuts or seeds, makes them even more nutritious.”

Fruit alone

Fruit contains plenty of nutrients, but it’s primarily a source of carbohydrates, which Nichola says, “might lead to a quick energy spike and subsequent crash, leaving you hungry soon after”.

Instead, pair fruit with protein and fats, she concludes: “Add nuts, seeds, or nut butter – mix with Greek yoghurt or cottage cheese or blend into a smoothie with milk, protein powder, and avocado.”