- Breakfasts

Is your breakfast healthy?



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NUTRITION & YOU



Breakfast is said to be the most important meal of the day, but just eating something in the morning does not automatically make it healthy or cannot be termed as breakfast in true sense.

A nutritious breakfast or the first meal of the day should be the one that should give a kick start to the day ahead. Ideally it should support energy, keep one alert and most importantly keep appetite controlled throughout the day. Sadly, many common breakfast habits can leave one hungry, tired or consuming more calories which makes one lethargic.

Body's morning recharge

A healthy breakfast is like charging mobile phone before starting the day. Just as a phone needs sufficient charge to function efficiently throughout the day, our body and brain need the right nutrients to provide energy, concentration and stamina. Skipping breakfast or choosing a nutrient-poor meal is like starting the day with a low energy. A balanced breakfast with protein, fibre, healthy fats and whole grains helps 'charge' the body and prepares one for a productive day. So, what are some of the common breakfast mistakes we make?

Starting the day with only tea/coffee

A cup of tea or coffee may be part of morning routine, but it should not replace breakfast. Having caffeine on an empty stomach may cause discomfort in some people. Pair it with a nutritious meal or snack containing protein and fibre, but making sure that there is a gap of at least 30 min between both.

Choosing refined carbohydrates

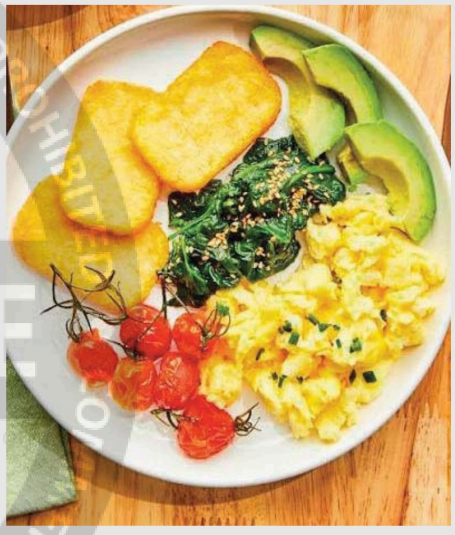
White bread, biscuits, sugary cereals, pastries and many bakery products, often seen on hotel breakfast tables can provide quick energy but are often low in fibre and protein. They may cause sugar spikes, followed by hunger soon after. Combining whole grains with protein, for example, whole-wheat toast with egg, or oats with Greek yoghurt and nuts or chickpea/millet flour cheela keeps one full and energetic.

Breakfast cereals

Breakfast cereals can be a convenient morning option, but not all cereals are equally healthy. Many flavoured cereals are high in added sugar and refined grains providing little protein or fibre. When choosing cereal, check the nutrition label for whole grains, higher fibre and lower added sugar. Pairing cereal with milk or Greek yoghurt, nuts and fresh fruit can make it a more balanced and satisfying breakfast.

Having too little protein

Protein is one of the most commonly missed nutrients at breakfast. A protein-rich breakfast can help with fullness and support muscle maintenance, which becomes increasingly important with age. Foods like, eggs, Greek yoghurt, milk, paneer, sprouts, dal, beans, nuts or seeds are good protein options.



Having fruit juice

Fruit juice, even when freshly prepared, can provide a concentrated source of natural sugars while offering less fibre than whole fruit. Eating whole fruit is generally a better choice because the fibre helps slow digestion and promotes fullness. Hence, a small bowl of mixed fruit is a better option for a balanced breakfast.

Overlooking portion sizes

Healthy foods still contain calories. Large portions of nuts, granola, cheese, parathas or smoothies can turn a nutritious breakfast into a calorie-heavy meal. The goal is not to eliminate these foods but to use sensible portions and create balance.

Cutting off vegetables or fibre

Breakfast is an excellent opportunity to include vegetables. Adding vegetables to an omelette, cheela, sandwich, idli or paratha increases fibre and micronutrient intake.

To conclude, a healthy breakfast does not need to be complicated. A balanced combination of protein + fibre-rich carbohydrates + healthy fats + fruit or vegetables, gives variety & nutrition all together. Choose foods that are satisfying, comforting and make them healthy by bringing small changes like adding nuts, veggies or fruits wherever possible.

(Vandana Chawla is an Online Nutrition Expert and a Registered Nutritionist-UKVRN Visit: https://thenutribaby.com)