

Brain-Boosting Healthy Breakfasts

Great ideas for quick and easy balanced, healthy breakfasts

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You know that old saying about breakfast being the most important meal of the day? For school-age kids, there's a lot of science to back up that adage. Eating breakfast has been associated with better academic performance and behavior in children. And research has also shown that eating a balanced breakfast -- one that includes protein and complex carbohydrates -- helps boost brain function. When you consider the fact that kids need to be able to concentrate in school and follow directions and pay attention, breakfast really is perhaps the most important meal of the day for school-age kids.

Here are some quick and easy tips and ideas for healthy power breakfasts for the whole family.

1. **Think outside the breakfast box.** Breakfast doesn't always have to mean toast and eggs. For a bit of variety--not to mention convenience, try heating up some leftovers. Got chicken from last nite's dinner? Make a chicken breakfast burrito or try one of these ideas for make-ahead breakfast burritos. Even spaghetti and meatballs can make a yummy breakfast with some steamed veggies to round out the meal. Who says dinner can't be breakfast the next day?
2. **Whip up a smoothie.** Smoothies can often be a life-saver for busy moms -- just blend together a few ingredients and you're out the door. If you're really running late, you can even take it with you in a travel cup. Try blending some frozen berries with a banana and yogurt or milk. (You can even sneak in some baby spinach or chopped kale if your child won't notice the taste.) Delicious, nutritious, fast, and portable--it's the perfect breakfast for a busy school morning.
1. **Boil some eggs.** Boiled eggs are an excellent choice for a high-protein breakfast. Make some the night before to save time in the morning. Serve with a slice of whole-grain toast or English muffin with some fruit and voila! You have a wonderful balanced breakfast.

2. **Try a nut butter.** Serve up some peanut or almond butter on whole-grain toast for a high-protein boost. You can add some honey or a little jam for some sweetness, and pour a glass of milk for a well-balanced brain-building breakfast.
1. **Offer some fish.** Who says you can't have fish for breakfast? Salmon and tuna are high in protein as well as healthy omega 3 fatty acids, which make them perfect breakfast foods. Try some tuna or salmon salad or smoked salmon with cream cheese on a bagel.
2. **Choose whole grain and skip the sugary cereal.** Get into the habit of reading labels when it comes to choosing a breakfast cereal. Opt for one that lists whole grains as one of the top ingredients and is low in sugar. Add some sliced bananas or raisins if you need to add sweetness.
3. **Be carb smart.** Fruits, whole-grain cereals and oatmeal are excellent choices for breakfast. These complex carbohydrates provide fiber and other nutrients and keep blood sugar levels relatively steady (unlike, say, sugary cereals, which can lead to rapid energy spikes and crashes).

Once you get your grade-schooler into the habit of having something in the morning, he'll be less likely to pass it up. And be sure to set a good example by eating something yourself; your child is less likely to balk at breakfast if you're having something together.