



Breakfast

Key to Academic Excellence

All children need breakfast every day

Bottom Line: It takes more than books for a child to learn

Every student needs to eat breakfast because a hungry child can't learn. Yet many children come to school without eating breakfast. Children may not eat breakfast because they don't have time or aren't hungry when they wake up. With busy family schedules, many children are left to prepare breakfast on their own. Those who do eat may choose low-nutrient foods that don't sustain energy levels throughout the morning. Many core subjects are taught in the morning, so make sure your child is fueled with the energy needed to perform better in school.



"The link between good nutrition and good education is clearly demonstrated by higher test scores, better attendance and fewer behavior problems in school."

— Dan Glickman, Former US Secretary of Agriculture

Benefits of Eating Breakfast

Children benefit because they:

- Have higher test scores, work faster, make fewer errors and are more creative
- Are less likely to be sent to the principal or visit the school nurse
- Are better able to concentrate on learning
- Are more cooperative and get along better with classmates
- Are healthier and have improved attendance

Teachers benefit because:

- Behavior improves and discipline problems decrease
- Academic success improves
- Attention increases

Parents benefit because children:

- Start the day ready to learn
- Are more likely to attend school
- Are less likely to visit the school nurse
- Behave better

When hunger strikes, children lose their focus.

Some stay at their desk and fade. Others "feel sick" and ask to go to the school nurse. And others just poke the child next to them.



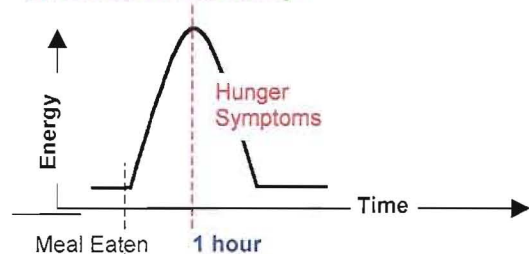
No matter how a child responds to the discomfort of hunger, all children lose out on learning when they don't eat breakfast.

Wise Food Choices Enhance Learning

In many classrooms, demanding school subjects like math and science are taught in the morning. When children eat breakfast, they start the day fueled to learn so they can do their best on their hardest work. A good breakfast also helps sustain students' energy throughout the morning.

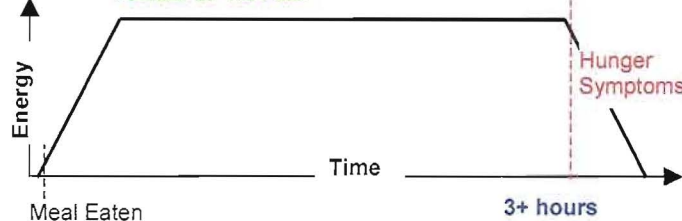
Comparison of energy available for learning from two different breakfasts

Breakfast #1: Sweetened Fruit Drink or Soda, Fruit-Filled Toaster Pastry



Sugary foods such as fruit, fruit juice or fruit drinks, candy or soda eaten in place of a meal cause a quick rise in blood sugar and energy in children. About an hour later, blood sugar and energy decline rapidly, bringing on symptoms of hunger.

Breakfast #2: Orange Juice, Toast or Cereal, Nonfat or 1% Milk

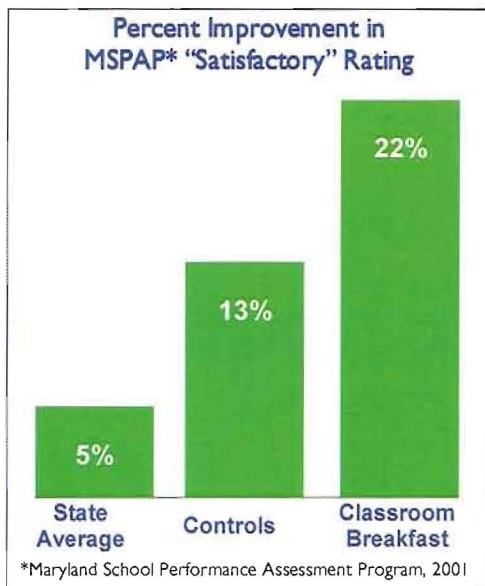


A healthy breakfast includes at least three Food Groups of the Food Guide Pyramid such as fruit or juice, bread or cereal and milk. These foods contain sugar, starch, protein and fat that digest at different rates and keep blood sugar up so energy levels are sustained throughout the morning.

Breakfast Programs Boost Brain Power

Two case studies in action...

- Maryland Meals for Achievement breakfast pilot program offers classroom breakfast to all students. The program found tardiness declined by 8 percent, suspensions decreased by 1.6 days per month, standardized test scores increased 17 percent over the state average and behavior improved.






































- By offering a nutritious breakfast to all students at little or no charge in more than 300 elementary schools, Minnesota's Fast Break to Learning school breakfast program helped prepare more than 40,000 children for a full morning of learning. The results from this breakfast program further support the link between making breakfast available, students' readiness to learn and academic achievement.



How Simple Can It Be?

Breakfast can be quick, easy and healthy. Here are ten quick, nutritious breakfasts that take less than 3 minutes to fix. The key indicates which three food groups are included in each breakfast.

Toasted English muffin, peanut butter, glass of milk	  
Cold cereal, banana and milk	  
Heated leftover cheese pizza	  
Crackers and cheese, orange wedges	  
Yogurt, apple and wheat toast	  
Ham and cheese sandwich with glass of milk	  
Heated leftover macaroni and cheese, apple	  
Instant oatmeal, canned peaches, milk	  
Baby carrots, mozzarella cheese stick, bagel	  
Tomato soup made with milk, crackers	  

Key:  = Milk Group  = Meat Group  = Vegetable Group
 = Fruit Group  = Grain Group

How to Make Sure Your Child Eats Breakfast

- Keep breakfast foods on hand.
- Keep breakfast foods highly visible and in convenient spots for children to grab.
- Be a role model for your child. Eat breakfast.
- Encourage your child to eat at school, if they don't get a chance to eat at home.



Connecticut State Department of Education and the New England Dairy & Food Council, 2002

Adapted with permission from Western Dairy Council

Resources

- Better Breakfast, Better Learning*, California Department of Education, 1994.
- Maryland Meals for Achievement Classroom Breakfast Pilot Program*, Maryland State Department of Education, 2001.
- School Breakfast Programs: Energizing the Classroom*, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1998.
- Teachers' Perceptions of the School Breakfast Program*, Connecticut State Department of Education, 1994.

For more information, contact the Connecticut State Department of Education Office of Child Nutrition at (860) 807-2070.