



Main Objective

Eat a healthy breakfast every morning by including foods from at least three of the food groups, making sure that at least one is high in calcium.

Background

Mom was right; breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Breakfast literally means to “break” a “fast.” By the time we wake up in the morning, we most likely have not had anything to eat for at least eight hours. The brain needs food, specifically carbohydrates, to function properly. After an eight hour fast, the brain is starving for some food, some fuel! Feeding the brain will help your students do well in school and stay alert during class. Of course, food also fuels the muscles and helps them to start moving in the morning and perform well during activities.

A healthy breakfast contains foods from at least three of the food groups. Aim to have a combination of whole grains (such as cereal or whole wheat toast), fruit (such as fresh, frozen or dried fruit or 100% fruit juice), vegetables (such as vegetables in an omelet or 100% vegetable juice), calcium-rich foods (such as low-fat yogurt or milk), and/or protein (such as eggs or cheese). Sugary cereal or breakfast treats are not the best option because they generally aren't whole grain and just provide a quick surge of energy (in the form of sugar) that disappears quickly.

Bones need a different type of fuel, calcium (a mineral), to keep them strong. It is hard for most students to start thinking about the hazards of weak bones. However, childhood happens to be the most important time to start building strong bones. If a person does not have enough calcium in his or her diet, bones become weak and brittle and are more likely to break. Dairy products are the best source of calcium; however, it is not the only source. When choosing dairy products, it is important to make low-fat selections. Non-dairy sources of calcium include some juices, cereals, legumes, and vegetables. (See handout for more non-dairy calcium sources.)

Water is also very important for the body and helps to keep it performing well throughout the day. The human body is made up of about 60% water. Water is lost every day by sweating, going to the bathroom, and even breathing! If the lost water is not replaced, cells in the body start to dehydrate. Even mild dehydration can lead to lack of concentration, fatigue, and poor performance in sports, activities, and learning. So drink up and fuel those cells!



Take Home Activities

- 1) Make sure healthy breakfast foods are available for everyone in the house.
- 2) Sit down and have breakfast together in the morning.
- 3) See what can be made the night before so breakfast will be easy in the morning (e.g. make a fruit smoothie the night before and freeze it).
- 4) Identify challenges that make it difficult for the family to eat breakfast. As a family, how can you overcome some of these challenges?
- 5) Identify all of the foods in the home that are good sources of calcium. If the family drinks milk, try milk with slightly less fat (e.g. go from whole to 2%, 2% to 1%, or 1% to non-fat).
- 6) If possible, encourage your schoolchildren to participate in National School Breakfast Week (the first full week in March).

School Activities

- 1) Promote school breakfast during National School Breakfast Week (the first full week in March). See <http://www.asfsa.org> or <http://www.schoolnutrition.org/nsbw>
- 2) If vending machines or snack bars are available to students, look into offering healthy breakfast foods.
- 3) Ensure that low- and non-fat milk options are available for snacks and meals.
- 4) Announce in the daily bulletin what the principal had for breakfast that morning.

Classroom Reward Ideas

Ask a local juice shop to donate fruit smoothies for breakfast, or ask the PTA to purchase the supplies and make smoothies in the classroom!

Resources

American School Food Service Association (ASFSA) - National School Breakfast Week
<http://www.schoolnutrition.org/nsbw>

ASFSA sponsors National School Breakfast Week during the first full week in March each year. See this website for additional information on the importance of breakfast and for activities to promote breakfast consumption both in the school and at home. Information, activities and menus are updated each year.

American Dietetic Association (ADA)

<http://www.eatright.org>

March is National Nutrition Month® (NNM). NNM is a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored annually by ADA. The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. Search for NNM and the current year to find information about events.



Resources

Food and Nutrition Services, USDA

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Collection/main.html>

The *Eat Smart Play Hard* campaign is designed to promote children's health by motivating children and their caregivers to eat healthy and to exercise. They have handouts for students and parents in both English and Spanish that promote a healthy breakfast every morning.

National Dairy Council

<http://www.nutritionexplorations.org>

The National Dairy Council has a lot of wonderful materials that promote breakfast and increased calcium consumption to kids, parents, teachers and food service workers. Kids can play interactive games while learning about the importance of a healthy breakfast. Teachers can find information and activities to help teach nutrition to their students. There are also several contests in which classrooms can participate.

California Dairy Council

<http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/edu>

Order free materials to use in the classroom that promote healthy eating habits, breakfast and increased calcium consumption. Web-based resources and activities are also available for download. Almost all activities are linked to California State Academic Content Standards. A Mobile Dairy Classroom can come to elementary schools for assemblies!

The National Bone Health Campaign

http://www.cdc.gov/powerfulbones/index_content.html

Powerful Girls have Powerful Bones is a site for young girls that has information and activities related to bone health. However, there is a lot of great information here that boys might find useful as well!



Activities Linked to 4th Grade Content Standards & Framework

**Statistics, Data
Analysis, & Probability**
1.1 & 1.2

Social Science
4.1.4 & 4.4.7

Physical Education 4.17

Health Framework
Expectation 1

 **Selected
Reading
List**

- Students can set up a questionnaire for their families, friends, or classmates to ask about breakfast eating habits. Once they have collected the data, they can use that information to identify the modes and medians, and graph the data to explain to others.
- Identify waterways in California. Pay particular attention to where people play and where our drinking water comes from.
- Students can begin to understand that the body burns food (in the form of calories) into energy so we can be physically active.
- Discuss some of the barriers to eating a healthy breakfast every morning. As a class, can you come up with some ways to overcome these barriers?

Pass the Energy, Please! by Barbara Shaw McKinney – Science