Morning and I go together like a warm, relaxing bath and a toaster. When it feels like your body clock and your alarm clock aren’t even set in the same time zone, the daily struggle usually begins with a draw; the best-laid plans will go askew in lieu of fifteen more minutes of shut-eye. You try to cram it all in every morning but something’s gotta give, right? Maybe you’re not that hungry or maybe you just can’t seem to make it work but when we cut our losses, it seems like breakfast is the first to feel the squeeze.

Although most of us have been told that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, not everybody gets a balanced bite in before it’s time to dash out the door – but skipping breakfast could have bigger health implications than going hungry until lunch. If you’re one of the 31 million Americans that nixes breakfast completely, you may want to consider the following.

Heralding breakfast as the undisputed heavyweight champion sounds hyperbolic but this declaration is rooted in truth; a myriad of studies tout evidence that supports an array of physiological and cognitive benefits. With advantages ranging from increased mental performance in areas related to memory and alertness in the classroom to an over-all lowered risk for chronic disease, almost every biological system and every representable demographic seems to have something to reap from eating breakfast, and something to lose when you skip.

People who eat breakfast get more calcium and fiber in their diet than those who don’t. Failing to “break your fast” does not bode well for your waistline. Results from the HUNT Study, an adult all-population survey conducted in the last decade, found that an infrequent consumption of early meals (breakfast and lunch) and a low intake of whole-grain breads was positively associated with obesity. In 2002, Obesity published a study with almost 3000 subjects citing that breakfast eaters were successful weight loss maintainers. Nutrition Journal (a publication out of Germany) reported in 2013 that people who ate less at breakfast ate less overall throughout the day. Breakfast eaters tend to take in less calories but score better overall on nutritional profile analyses.

A study published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association found that young women who eat cereal perform better on cognition tests and, on average, get more of the types of nutrients their bodies need than their cereal-skipping colleagues. There are a multitude of health benefits specifically attributed to whole-grain intake at breakfast. Selecting a ready-to-eat cereal that contains at least 2.5 grams of dietary fiber and is low in sugar is a quick and easy way to get more of what you need and less of what you don’t.

Poor eating habits established during adolescence often carry into adulthood. The older you are, the more likely you are to skip breakfast entirely. Girls tend to skip more often than guys, and more frequently as they age. Metabolic syndrome is a term
used to describe a class of risk factors that are associated with heart-related diseases and early death including obesity, hypertension, and poor blood sugar regulation. A study published in Public Health Nutrition, a peer-reviewed forum for research in nutrition-related health problems, found that teenagers who skipped breakfast had a higher instance of metabolic syndrome as adults (68% higher) than those who ate a substantial morning meal.

Here are a few general guidelines to follow when even the busiest mornings have you dueling with the clock.

### Make it Multi-task
- Hit a few nutrition targets in one fell swoop. Shakes are an awesome way to incorporate fruits, veggies, and proteins into your first meal. Think low fat and high protein when selecting your base, whether it’s dairy or soy milk, yogurt, or kefir. Forget the ice and use a slightly under ripe banana as a binder. Add as many fresh or frozen fruit and veggies as palatably possible. Get creative and try new combinations – add a protein source like chia seeds for texture or some spinach for a verdant burst of vitamin A or avocado for healthy fats. Try a different smoothie every day!

### Make it Repeatable
- Just like good science, a good routine is easily replicated. Invest in some good quality Tupperware. Remember to keep up on your dishes – a clean cooking space practically invites healthy eating. Take a lot of the stress and burden out of preparing morning meals that require a range by chopping up vegetables like onions and peppers for your omelet over the weekend. Keep portion-sized servings of granola in Ziploc bags and fruit salad next to your single-serving items like low-sugar Greek yogurt for a breakfast you can stuff in your bag for later or prep some hard-boiled eggs and grab a tangerine for a snack that nature already individually wrapped.

### Make it Simple
- Not every morning meal has to be a full-on production. Buff up your instant morning staples with some easily incorporated additions. Make your oatmeal with fat-free milk instead of water and mix in a fruit puree, chopped nuts, or berries. Sprinkle with cinnamon to soften the sugar spike or add agave nectar for a creamy, sweet flavor boost.
- Sliced strawberries, peanut butter, and a drizzle of honey on a whole-grain bagel halve nails every category – it’s delicious, nutritious and a veritable powerhouse of the kinds of nutrients that keep you full all morning.
- Scramble one whole egg and one or two egg whites in a little of your favorite heart-healthy oil and add some of those vegetables you prepared earlier in the week. If you’re really pressed for time, microwave your eggs! Add a little milk to your whisked eggs and microwave for 30 seconds. Stir, and microwave for an additional 15 seconds. Make it a meal with a side of low-fat cottage cheese and some whole wheat toast or wrap the whole thing in a whole-wheat tortilla and take it with you.

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**Works Cited**

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