

# Skipping Breakfast Can Lead to Unhealthy Habits All Day Long

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Compared to breakfast-eaters, breakfast-skippers tend to weigh more and have other unhealthy habits, such as consuming too many sugary drinks or high-calorie snacks, according to a panel discussion during a symposium at the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) 2012 Annual Meeting & Food Expo.

Research shows about 18 percent of Americans older than age 2 regularly skip breakfast, said Nancy Auestad, PhD, vice president of regulatory affairs at the Dairy Research Institute. They are missing out on key nutrients, she said, pointing to statistics that show breakfast-eaters get about 17 percent of their daily calories from breakfast as well as a significant portion of their daily recommend intake of several key nutrients, such as Vitamin D (58 percent), Vitamin B12 (42 percent) and Vitamin A (41 percent).

In addition, studies of young people found that breakfast-skippers consume 40 percent more sweets, 55 percent more soft drinks, 45 percent fewer vegetables and 30 percent less fruit than people who eat breakfast.

“Most of these negative factors were abbreviated when breakfast was consumed, compared with breakfast-skippers,” said Heather Leidy, PhD, assistant professor in the department of nutrition and exercise physiology at the University of Missouri. “Targeting that behavior could lead to a reduction in obesity.”

Leidy conducted research focusing on the role of protein in breakfast, and she found that the effects of breakfast-skipping were felt throughout the day. She assembled a group of 10 breakfast-skipping teenagers and split them into groups that consumed no breakfast, a normal-protein breakfast and a high-protein breakfast. By measuring their hunger levels and several other indicators, she found that eating a healthy breakfast of any kind lead to more satiety and less overeating throughout the day, but these benefits were especially prominent among the teens who ate the high-protein breakfast. They consumed about 200 calories less in evening snacking, she said.

Her study also used magnetic resonance imaging to determine that a protein-rich breakfast reduces the brain signals controlling food desires, even many hours after breakfast.

Despite the benefits of consistently eating breakfast, all the participants in Leidy’s study went back to being breakfast-skippers within six months, citing the lack of available healthy, high-protein foods. This means the food industry has to work to create more of these options to fit into the lifestyle of busy kids and adults.

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