

... September 2011 ...

QUICK TAKES

Eat Breakfast, Lose Weight

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans call for concrete action steps to help people make healthier food choices. When it comes to the first meal of the day, the advice is clear. "Eat a nutrient-dense breakfast." It's one of their six principles of weight loss. Research shows that regularly skipping breakfast is linked to excess weight, especially among children and adolescents. The reverse is true, as well: Those who routinely eat breakfast have greater success at maintaining a healthy weight. Breakfast eaters benefit in other ways, too:

- A nutritious breakfast provides the energy that helps children (and grownups) stay focused throughout the morning.
- Many breakfast foods are excellent sources of vitamins A and C, calcium, iron and fiber -- nutrients that are not as common in the foods kids typically eat the rest of the day.
- A balanced breakfast helps kids avoid the mid-morning hunger pangs that often lead to grazing on junk food.

Buying Better Groceries

One in every three American children is overweight or obese. It is an epidemic that is compromising the lives of millions of our youngest citizens. Weight-related diseases that used to only affect adults, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or painful joint conditions, are now showing up in boys and girls.



What can parents and caregivers do?

An important step for addressing weight issues with children is to improve the diet and exercise habits of the whole family. Make sure your kids know that healthy eating is a priority. You can't make choices for your kids, especially as they get older. But you can encourage them to make better food decisions. Successful strategies include:

- Make sure your kids eat a nutrient-dense breakfast every day.
- Serve plenty of vegetables at dinner. Veggies aren't simply "sides" anymore. They should occupy about half of the real estate on the plate.
- Keep healthy snacks on hand, including fruits and whole-grain options.
- Drink water or low-fat milk with meals instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Learn to how make healthier choices when grocery shopping for your family.

Easy Tips for Buying Better Groceries

Few of us have the time to study ingredients and Nutrition Facts on every single item that goes into our shopping carts. More often than not, we grab the products we know and head straight to the checkout line.

Below are the top four food categories purchased by families with children, with tips on how to spot healthier cereal, dairy, bread and snack choices on your next trip to the supermarket. You'll learn that it's not hard to cut calories and unwanted fats while boosting healthy fiber, vitamins and minerals in the foods you buy regularly.

1. BREAKFAST CEREALS

You don't have to look far to find healthy options in the cereal aisle anymore. Cereal manufacturers have responded to consumer demand for more whole grains and less sugar. But high-calorie, sugary brands still take up a lot of shelf space at the supermarket. Check labels and look for cereals:

- With at least 3 grams of dietary fiber per serving.
- With no more than 8 grams of sugars per serving.
- Without trans fats or "hydrogenated fat" listed in the ingredient list.

If family members aren't quite ready to quit their low-fiber favorite, try mixing it with a higher-fiber option. They might enjoy the taste!

Buying Better Groceries (cont.)

2. DAIRY -- MILK, YOGURT AND CHEESE

- Milk is a terrific source of protein, calcium and vitamin D -- three critical nutrients for growing children. It can also be a source of not-so-terrific saturated fat. If you're a family of whole-milk drinkers, start by switching to 2 percent milk, then drop down to 1 percent after a month or two. Your family might not even notice the change.
- An 8-ounce container of fruit-flavored yogurt contains 7 or 8 teaspoons of added sugar. Plain yogurt offers a much better bang for your calorie buck. Fat-free Greek-style yogurt is surprisingly thick and creamy -- enjoy it with fresh or frozen berries and a teaspoon of maple syrup.
- When buying cheese for pizzas, sandwiches and snacks, explore the wide assortment of flavorful reduced-fat options. Remember, reducing the fat also reduces calories.
- Fat-free sour cream has about half the calories of the full-fat version, and it tastes just as rich and delicious on enchiladas or baked potatoes.

3. BREAD

A typical family can easily go through three or four loaves of bread every week -- and that doesn't include wraps, bagels, buns, English muffins, pita breads and other bread stand-ins. Few people realize just how quickly bread calories add up. Bread calories range from 70 to 90 per slice, depending on size and variety.

- Shop for whole-grain breads, buns, rolls and more. The specific whole grain should appear first on the ingredient list. Look for whole-wheat flour, rye flour, oat bran, cornmeal or other whole grains.
- To limit calories, switch to whole-grain light bread or sandwich thins. They have about half the calories of regular breads.
- When checking calories, remember a single serving equals one slice of bread, not two.

If the white-bread fans in your family resist the switch to whole grains, ease the transition with oat bread. It has a creamy, light color and mild flavor.

4. SNACKS

A recent Harvard study put potato chips at the top of the list of foods most likely to cause weight gain. It seems that with most crunchy, salty snacks, it's impossible to eat just one. When shopping for snacks for the family, look for baked, not fried, chips and crackers and choose brands made with whole grain. Even then portion control is key. Perhaps the best snack-shopping strategy is to steer clear of the snack-food aisle altogether and head over to the produce aisle. Fruits you can eat out of hand are nature's ideal snack food. Apples, plums, pears, grapes and bananas are all portable and in season now.

Breakfast Burritos Makes: 6 servings

Stock your freezer with homemade breakfast burritos. Make a double recipe on the weekend: wrap burritos individually so kids can nuke them as needed on weekday mornings.

Ingredients

2 teaspoons olive oil
3 green onions, sliced
4 large eggs, beaten
1 14-oz. can diced tomatoes with green chilies, such as Muir Glen or Hunts, drained
1 cup corn kernels (fresh or frozen)
6 large whole-wheat flour tortillas
1 15.5-oz. can low-sodium refried black beans, such as Amy's Kitchen or Eden Foods
1 cup crumbled queso fresco or shredded part-skim mozzarella

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Preparation

1. Heat the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring, until soft. Whisk together the eggs, drained tomatoes and corn kernels. Pour into the skillet. Cook, stirring all the while, until the eggs are set. Remove the pan from the heat.
2. Place a tortilla on the work surface. Spread about 2 tablespoons refried beans in the center. Spoon about one-sixth of the egg mixture on top. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons cheese. Fold the sides in and roll up. Wrap in plastic wrap. Repeat with the remaining tortillas and filling.
3. Burritos can be baked straightaway or frozen and cooked at a later date. Individual fresh burritos take 1-2 minutes to warm in the microwave or 20 minutes in a 375°F oven. Frozen burritos take 2-3 minutes to warm in the microwave or 40 minutes in a 375°F oven.
4. Bake until the edges are brown and firm, about 20 minutes.



Nutritional info per serving

380 Calories
13g Fat
3g Saturated fat
18g Protein
47g Carbohydrate
8g Fiber
489mg Sodium

Source:
**Healthy Living
Kitchens**

