

Webinar 2 Handout:
BREAKFAST

You've heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. (FYI, I believe all meals are equally important. But, breakfast gets a lot of attention because it is often skipped.) People have a lot of theories about it, and there is a lot of money and marketing pushing you to eat your Wheaties. While I could make a case for lunch and dinner, breakfast is probably the most controversial meal, so it gets some special attention here. Every client I meet will hear me tell them to eat something within an hour of waking. Really, breakfast is not only the most efficient way to kickstart your morning metabolism and sharpen your concentration, but it can also help you make healthier choices for the rest of the day. Yes, even after dinner!

There are tons of breakfast skippers (you know who you are) out there. People report that they either don't *feel* hungry in the morning or they don't have enough time to fit in a meal. Whichever category you or your client fits into, it's time for a change. Here's why:

Revs up metabolism: When you shut your eyes after a long day, your body finds sleep and happily settles into a resting metabolic mode. Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR) or Resting Metabolic Rate (RMR) is the amount of calories your body requires at rest -- usually about 1400 - 1900 calories -- to perform the minimal requirements of your resting body. Your BMR/ RMR requires fewer calories with age, but increased lean body mass actually increases your BMR/RMR, which means you burn more calories at rest if you have more lean muscle. In your resting state, your body is just metabolic enough to keep your heart rate slowly chugging along, your lungs gently inhaling and exhaling and your brain quietly functioning. By the time you wake in the morning, your metabolism is much slower than its normal daytime rhythm. Until you take your first bite of food for the day, you remain in a sort of "powered down" mode, with slower metabolic functioning in an effort to conserve energy (remember, you have been "fasting" since the night before.) This is where breakfast comes into play. Starting your day with a morning meal initiates thermogenesis, the metabolic process that gets your body going. There is also a process called the thermic effect of food, whereby your body burns calories to digest your food. You want to eat your oatmeal so you will burn calories through digestion and boost your metabolism. Breakfast wakes up your metabolism, even if the rest of you isn't ready to be up and at 'em!

Promotes weight loss/maintenance: The National Weight Control Registry is a log of men and women who have lost anywhere from 30 to 300 lbs and have kept it off for at least 5 ½ years. One of the most striking characteristics of this group is their breakfast habits: 78% eat breakfast every day. Another study from The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development reported as of 2011, the percent of obese adults (BMI > 30) in America is 26.1% while the percent of obese adults in Germany is 13.7%. One reason for this difference? Over 75% of Germans eat breakfast every day, while only 44% of Americans do.

Besides the stats, it makes sense why breakfast supports a healthy weight. A good way to illustrate this is to look at what happens when you *don't* have breakfast. People think skipping breakfast is an easy way to save calories. This brings us back to thermogenesis. First and foremost, skipping breakfast means you don't initiate the process of thermogenesis -- the car is idling, but not going anywhere. This programs your body to run on less calories because your body is not burning calories in the process of thermogenesis. Having a slow metabolism while you are awake and going about your day is inefficient. To build on this, your body interprets the lack of morning food-fuel as "starvation" mode and won't really get out of that BMR/RMR state and into a more thermogenic or metabolic state until you put some fuel in the tank. In other words, when you don't eat breakfast you're saying to your body "Don't burn so much energy! I don't know when my next meal is."

Hunger, or readiness to eat, is actually a good thing. It tells you that your body has used and burned the fuel you've eaten and it's time to put gas in the tank. Feeling famished, on the other hand -- especially because it's lunchtime and you haven't had a thing to eat yet -- is not a good feeling and not good for your body. This results in overeating most of the time. You may help yourself to an extra large lunch (it's okay because 'you saved calories by skipping breakfast', right?), amounting to more calories overall than you would have eaten if you'd had a sensible breakfast. Keep in mind that you do not become more metabolically active or have increased thermogenic effects of food from a large meal. This is one reason why smaller, more frequent meals are better than a couple of large ones: you keep burning energy digesting your food. In other words, if you skip meals, your metabolism is not at it's max and you eat more. Double whammy!

If we want to go back to the research, one London study found people who skipped breakfast found higher fat and calorie foods more appealing later in the day. It concluded that "fasting mode made people are hungrier!"

Keeps hunger hormones in check: Ghrelin, the hunger hormone, runs rampant through your body during fasting and energy restriction. It's your body's natural way of communicating when it needs energy. Ghrelin levels only decrease with food intake. Studies show that even a "light" breakfast of carbohydrates, protein, and fat significantly reduces ghrelin levels in your body. This is why you stop feeling hungry after a (nutritious!) meal. Research shows that ghrelin seems to respond most to breakfasts high in protein or quality carbohydrates (think: oatmeal and a spoonful of peanut butter) and respond least to breakfasts high in fat (think fried donut). Of course, ghrelin levels will decrease after any energy intake, but they will stay lower *longer* with a nutrient dense meal.

Improves cognition: Research shows that eating breakfast improves several aspects of cognition, including memory, alertness, concentration, and even mood. In fact, the cognitive benefits of breakfast are so championed that the School Breakfast Program of the Food and Nutrition Service branch of the USDA provides free breakfasts to students at over 89,000 schools across the country. The School Breakfast Program started as an experiment in 1966 when teachers realized their students were coming to class sluggish, inattentive, and distracted because they hadn't eaten breakfast and were starving. Many of the kids hadn't eaten since the night before and by the time they were in class the next morning, they couldn't concentrate, let alone learn or perform. Since the School Breakfast Program was enacted, participating schools have seen improved attendance, attention, and test scores and less incidence of school nurse visits, disciplinary action and suspension. Adult research has found that breakfast eating is linked to improved mood, better memory and stronger cognitive performance. How about all that for just having breakfast?

Sets you up for a healthier day: In the Nutritious Life house that you are building, breakfast is the foundation for your day, and you want your breakfast to contain high quality, nutrient-dense foods. Laying a good foundation with a lean protein, healthful fat and fiber combination will give you sturdy structure to build the rest of your day of eating. Protein and fat provide satiety and fiber keeps you full. Without that foundation, your platform for healthful eating may come crashing down. Think about building a house without a foundation. The walls will eventually fall. That craving for a bag of jelly beans or bowl of pasta is the food equivalent to this. If you start the day with a spinach omelet and sliced melon, you'll feel good and clean going into your day, the protein will keep you satisfied, and the fiber will keep you full. Starting with a donut will make you feel lousy, and more inclined to say "yes" to the fast food, instead of the salad. SA morning of empty calories and a sugar rush will only negate the advantages breakfast provides, so instead be sure to incorporate some combination of lean protein, healthy fat, and fiber. Say "yes" to the oatmeal with peanut butter and cinnamon and leave the Pop Tarts on memory lane.

Gets nutrients in: Breakfast is your first opportunity in the day to consume the nutrients your body needs. If you skip it, you're missing a chance to nourish your body with the vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients. Think outside the cereal box--there are so many delicious and nutritious options for your morning meal (like the ideas below and on the tool). Keep in mind, you do not need a feast to call it breakfast. For those who are reluctant to eat breakfast, a morning "snack" may be a good choice -- an apple with a smear of peanut butter will work, and a legit breakfast can follow in a few hours. Healthy homemade trail mix with nuts, dried fruit, and popcorn may suffice to kick start your metabolism, and you can save the eggs for when your coffee kicks in. If you are starting to come around, but aren't convinced that breakfast is all I'm touting it to be, try a smoothie (recipe below) or a latte, instead of nothing. This may be an easier transition than actually chewing and you'll feel the effects immediately!

Note: You're sure to find some anti-breakfast research out there. One study, from Vanderbilt University in 2013, reported that much of the breakfast research has been poor and inaccurate. Other studies, including one from the UK published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, find breakfast makes no difference when it comes to weight or health. Despite a little contradictory research, I am a strong breakfast believer and do not think these findings are as compelling as the other breakfast research out there. Thinking critically, it makes sense to me based on thermogenesis research and my experience that breakfast sets a good foundation for a healthful diet. My most successful clients eat some version of breakfast regularly.

Breakfast can look like:

Option 1:

- 1 slice Ezekiel toast
- 1 egg
- 1 slice fresh mozzarella cheese
- 1 large slice of tomato
- ¼ cup arugula

Option 2:

- ½ cup oatmeal
- 1 banana, diced
- 2 teaspoons peanut or almond butter
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon

Option 3:

- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- ½ cup high fiber cereal, such as *Nature's Path Smart Bran**
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- ½ cup berries

Option 4 (Smoothie):

- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- 2 teaspoons almond butter
- 1 teaspoon flax meal

Set your alarm clock a little earlier and enjoy a filling, nutritious breakfast *every single morning*. You'll see its benefits throughout your day and soon enough, you'll be a breakfast believer too.

**In general, I am not a huge fan of most cereals. Does any food naturally come from earth in shape of a square, circle or flake? However, many people enjoy eating cereal and there are better-for-you options out there, such as the Nature's Path product mentioned above. When choosing a nutritious cereal, it all comes down to the ingredient list. Choose products with a short list of wholesome ingredients, such as ancient grains, chia and flax. Avoid products that pack soy protein isolates and several different types of sweeteners. As a general rule, cereals with at least 5 grams of fiber and less than 8 grams of sugar per serving are better choices.*