

# **Volunteer Leader Training Guide**

## **Start Your Day With a Healthy Breakfast**

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### **Introduction**

People who eat a breakfast are significantly less likely to be obese and diabetic than those who usually don't eat breakfast. A 2003 study showed that obesity and insulin resistance syndrome rates were 35 to 50 percent lower among people who ate breakfast every day compared to those who frequently skipped breakfast. We don't know exactly why breakfast eaters have lower risk, but the study found that eating whole-grain cereal each day was associated with a 15 percent reduction in risk for the insulin resistance syndrome.<sup>1</sup>

Another study found that people who skipped breakfast had a significantly higher risk of obesity. Subjects who regularly skipped breakfast had 4.5 times the risk of obesity as those who regularly ate breakfast. Those who frequently ate breakfast away from home had more than twice the risk of obesity than those who ate at home.<sup>2</sup>

USDA recently published data showing that 80 percent of Americans eat breakfast on any given day. Those who skip breakfast are most likely to be teens and young adults, African Americans and lower income family members. About one-fourth of Americans eat breakfast away from home on any given day, and when they do, the types of foods they choose are different than those eaten at home. Foods eaten away from home are higher in fat and sugar and lower in calcium and fiber than foods eaten at home. The nutrients most often lacking in Americans' diets are vitamins A, E and C and magnesium and, for certain groups, phosphorus, vitamin B<sub>6</sub> and zinc. Breakfasts are rich in these nutrients and others like folate, calcium and iron.<sup>3</sup>

### **Target Audience**

- Extension Homemakers

### **Objectives**

Participants will be able to:

- state why breakfast is an important meal.
- select healthful breakfast foods from MyPyramid.
- plan breakfast menus that take little time to prepare.
- read labels on breakfast cereals and convenience foods to choose those that are low in fat and sodium and high in fiber.

## Main Teaching Points

- Eating breakfast is an important way for all family members to start the day for good health.
- Breakfast provides an important source of energy and nutrients to start the day.

## Prior to the Meeting

Collect a variety of Nutrition Facts labels from breakfast cereals and convenience foods. Select labels that show a range of fiber content – some showing high fiber content (5 or more grams), some in the medium range (2.5-4.9 grams) and some in the low range (less than 2.5 grams). They also should show a range of fat content – high (more than 3 grams per serving) and low (3 grams per serving or less). Include labels from both hot and cold cereals.

Obtain enough copies of handouts and pencils for each participant.

## Outline for Teaching the Lesson

*As participants come into the room, give them a pencil and a copy of **Learning About Breakfast**, Handout 1. Ask them to fill in the top section on the first page, “For breakfast this morning I ate:” by drawing or writing the foods they ate. Throughout the lesson, wait for responses and encourage discussion from the group whenever you ask a question.*

**Leader says:** Today’s lesson is going to cover a meal that is often forgotten but is very important – breakfast. What would happen if you got in your car in the morning, the gas gauge showed the gas tank was near empty, and you tried to drive 25 to 30 miles?

Very likely, you wouldn’t make it across town because your car wouldn’t have enough gas or energy. It would be too weak and might sputter along for awhile before it quit. Breakfast is like filling the gas tank of your car with gas. Throughout the night, your body uses energy from the food you ate the day before. In the morning, your body needs a new supply of energy. We need to “break the fast” by eating. A healthful breakfast can help provide the energy and nutrients we need to start the day off well.

### Main Concept #1

Breakfast provides an important source of energy and nutrients to start the day.

**Leader says:** Look at the first page of your worksheet, **Learning About Breakfast**. On the first page, you’ll see a clock. I’m going to ask you five questions. You can write your answers on or near the clock in the space provided.

1. At what time did you last eat yesterday? Use a *solid line* to mark this time on the clock on your worksheet.
2. At what time did you first eat today? Use a *dotted line* to mark this time on the clock on your worksheet.

3. At what time did you get up today? Write the time on the line.
4. How many hours did your body go without food? Count the number of hours that went by from the time you last ate yesterday until you first ate today. Write this number on the line.
5. Did you go for more than one or two hours without eating anything after you got up? If the answer is yes, why is this so? Write the reasons for skipping your first meal of the day. What are some reasons you might skip breakfast?

*Give participants a chance to respond. Common reasons follow: not hungry in the morning, do not like breakfast foods, not enough time, want to lose weight. During today's lesson, you'll get an opportunity to discuss how you might solve some of these barriers.*

If you skip breakfast, your body may go without a source of energy and nutrients for as long as 18 hours.

Ask participants to think about how long a body would go without a source of energy and nutrients if a person eats his or her last meal at 6 p.m. and doesn't eat again until noon on the following day. *The person wouldn't have food for 18 hours.*

**Leader says:** Research shows that breakfast affects attention span, coordination and mental performance for both adults and children. Many adults experience a mid-morning "slump" if they skip breakfast. They feel tired, irritable and hungry. Adults who eat breakfast do better on the job and have fewer accidents.

Breakfast is important for long-term health, too. Research shows that breakfast eaters tend to eat fewer calories and fat throughout the day, which is important for maintaining a healthy weight and healthy heart. People who eat breakfast are significantly less likely to be obese and diabetic and are at a reduced risk for heart disease than those who usually don't eat breakfast. Finally, eating breakfast is one of seven health habits linked to a longer life expectancy.

Breakfast is important for your children, too. Children who don't eat breakfast may be tired and cranky, and if they go to school, they won't do as well. Studies show that children who eat breakfast do better in school, pay attention longer and get along better with teachers and friends. Also, children who eat a regular breakfast are more likely to be breakfast eaters as adults.

**Leader asks:** How many of you skip breakfast because you aren't hungry in the morning? This is probably the easiest barrier to solve. Does anyone have any suggestions on how you might solve this barrier? The main thing to remember is that breakfast doesn't have to be right away in the morning. Many children and adults need a little waking up time before they are hungry and ready to eat. Eating an hour or two after waking is just fine. Also, you don't have to eat a full breakfast at one sitting. You might have something light to start – a glass of juice – and then have a nutritious snack a little later, like some graham crackers and a glass of milk or yogurt and a piece of fruit.

**Leader says:** If you can, plan your time so that you and your children or grandchildren can enjoy breakfast together as a family mealtime. You can set a good example for children by eating a variety of breakfast foods and by drinking milk. It's also a good opportunity to provide them with early nutrition education. Explain how the different foods help the body – for example, milk makes your bones and teeth strong.

No matter how old a child is, he or she needs regular mealtimes and nutritious foods. Just like with adults, it is up to the child to decide what and how much to eat and whether to eat at all. If you can't enjoy breakfast with your children or if they aren't ready for breakfast early in the morning, make sure they get breakfast later.

### **Main Concept #2**

A healthful breakfast includes foods from at least three of the five food groups on MyPyramid.

**Leader asks:** What kinds of foods do you usually think of when you think of breakfast foods? Let a few participants respond. How many of you wrote down that you skip breakfast because you don't like "breakfast foods"? Let a few participants respond.

**Leader says:** Many of us think of traditional breakfast foods such as cereal, bacon, eggs, toast, pancakes and other foods. But you may not like those foods, or you may not like to eat those foods in the morning. Yet a healthful breakfast can include just about any food from any of the five major food groups on MyPyramid. On page 2 of your worksheet, you'll see a MyPyramid with some blank lines for each food group. I'd like each of you to take some time and write down some specific foods in each of the food groups that you might eat for breakfast.

*After the participants have a chance to fill in their worksheets, ask them to discuss some of the foods they wrote down. Remind the group that some popular breakfast choices may be high in fat or sugar – doughnuts, sweet rolls, pastries, muffins, some cold cereals, some meats, some dairy products. Reading labels for fat content will be discussed in more detail later.*

**Leader says:** You can eat a wide variety of foods for breakfast. A good rule to follow is to have a breakfast that includes foods from at least three different food groups on MyPyramid, with at least two of those food groups being from the grains, vegetables and fruit groups.

On page 2 of your worksheet, you'll see some spaces for writing out some breakfast menus. Work in groups of two or three people, and plan at least three menus using the foods you wrote down on page 2. Your menus should include foods from at least three different food groups.

*After the participants have had a chance to fill in their own worksheets, ask them to discuss some of the menus they wrote down.*

### **Main Concept #3**

Breakfast doesn't have to take a lot of time to prepare in the morning.

**Leader asks:** Did any of you write down that you skip breakfast because you don't have enough time in the morning? Breakfast foods don't have to take a lot of time to prepare in the morning. Look at the foods and menus you've written down on your worksheet. What foods would take little time to prepare in the morning?

*Ask participants to name different foods. Examples might include cereal, English muffins, bagels, tortillas, toast, crackers; canned or fresh fruit, fruit or vegetable juices; milk, yogurt, cheese cubes or slices, pudding; leftover lean meat, beans, peanut butter; leftover soups, casseroles and pizza.*

Besides selecting foods that need little or no preparation, what are some other ways you can be sure to have enough time to eat breakfast in the morning?

*Ask participants to name different techniques they can use. Here are examples:*

- Set the table the night before.
- Mix the juice the night before.
- Set the alarm to ring 10 minutes earlier.
- Plan a “sack breakfast” that you can prepare the night before and eat in the car or at your desk at school or work. An example might be a muffin, a banana and juice in a travel mug. Ask the group to come up with other sack breakfast ideas.
- Use the microwave to prepare single servings of hot cereals, such as oatmeal or cream of wheat. You can buy these hot cereals in large, economical packages rather than the higher-cost single serving packets.
- Have children prepare their own breakfast from easy-to-prepare food choices.

### **Main Concept #4**

A healthy breakfast can be low in fat and high in fiber.

**Leader says:** Before we begin this last part of the lesson, I’d like each of you to come and pick up a label for one breakfast cereal or convenience breakfast food. You can choose either one that is a favorite or one that you’ve never tried before.

**Leader asks:** Did any of you write down that you skip breakfast because you want to lose weight?

**Leader says:** Many people skip breakfast because they want to lose weight and think that skipping this meal is a good strategy. But research shows that people who skip breakfast usually get over-hungry and end up eating a high-calorie mid-morning snack and/or overeating at lunch. The research also shows that breakfast eaters don’t consume any more calories in the total day than breakfast skippers, and many consume fewer calories than skippers.

Some choices within each of the food groups have more fat and sugar than other choices. The Nutrition Facts label can help you determine which foods are high or low in fat and sugar and also can help you select foods that are a good source of fiber. To maintain a healthy weight, a low-fat, high-fiber breakfast is the best approach. And low-fat breakfasts usually are less expensive, too.

Let’s compare the breakfast cereal labels you picked up. Choose a partner, and look at the following items on your labels: the grams of fat, saturated fat and *trans* fat per serving, the percent Daily Value for fat, saturated fat, the grams of fiber per serving and the percent Daily Value for fiber.

- Which cereals had less than 3 grams of fat per serving?  
*Have participants with these cereals stand up. Suggest that participants write down the names of these cereals on their worksheet and purchase these cereals more often.*
- Which cereals had more than 3 grams of fat per serving?  
*Have participants with these cereals stand up. Suggest that they buy these cereals less often.*

- Does anyone have a cereal that has any *trans* fat listed? *Trans* fat can raise your cholesterol, so it is a good idea to avoid foods with *trans* fat.

Now let's look at the fiber content.

- Which cereals had less than 2.5 grams per serving?  
*Have the participants with these cereals name the cereals.*
- Which cereals had between 2.5 and 4.9 grams of fiber per serving?  
*Have participants with these cereals stand up.*
- Which cereals had 5 or more grams of fiber per serving?  
*Have participants with these cereals stand up. Suggest that participants write down the names of these cereals on their worksheet and purchase these cereals more often.*

Look at the ingredient lists. The cereals with the most fiber probably have whole-grain or bran listed first in the ingredients list. If time permits, repeat this activity with convenience breakfasts foods.

Reading the Nutrition Facts label can give you the information you need to help you choose a low-fat, high-fiber breakfast foods. That's important information that can help you maintain a healthy weight and a healthy heart. A breakfast pattern that includes a low-fat, high-fiber cereal, skim milk and a piece of fruit or a glass of fruit juice is the easiest to prepare, is inexpensive and is nutrient-dense.

Page 4 of your worksheet includes some other breakfast patterns. For each pair of menus, circle the breakfast that provides the best nutritional value.

Allow time to discuss the answers participants selected on their worksheets.

## Summary

**Leader says:** It's time to review what we've covered. What are some things you've learned today? Wait for answers from the group.

You've learned why breakfast is an important meal. Breakfast helps both adults and children "break the fast" so they can perform their morning tasks better. Breakfast also is important for lifelong good health.

You've learned that a healthful breakfast includes foods from at least three food groups on MyPyramid, but they don't have to take long to prepare. And you've learned about reading labels to select foods low in fat and high in fiber.

Set a mini-goal.

To practice and remember what you've learned today, it's helpful to set a mini-goal. A mini-goal is something specific that you will do in the next week or so to help you apply something you've learned. Here are some examples of mini-goals:

- If you skip breakfast now, identify why you skip breakfast and plan some ways to solve that barrier.
- Try a new food for breakfast.
- Try a breakfast with foods from three different food groups.

- Plan a family mealtime around breakfast.
- Pack a “sack breakfast” to take with you to work or school.
- Compare the labels on some of your favorite breakfast foods to find out the fat and fiber content.

When you’ve decided on your mini-goal, write it down on page 1 of your worksheet. You also might want to share it with another class member or a member of your family so they can remind you or help you achieve your mini-goal.

**Leader says:** Please complete the evaluation form and return to me before you leave.

## Handouts/Worksheets

- Learning About Breakfast
- Recipes
- Evaluation

## References

1. Eating breakfast may reduce risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease. Alex I. Kartashov, Ph.D.; Linda Van Horn, Ph.D.; Martha Slattery, Ph.D.; David R. Jacobs Jr., Ph.D.; and David S. Ludwig, M.D., Ph.D. *Journal Report* 03/06/2003. <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3009715> accessed 4/21/07.
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Adapted from: Choose a healthful breakfast. 2000. Connie Betterley, M.S., R.D., EFNEP coordinator; Pat Anderson, Susan Klein, and Jill Weber, ISU Extension nutrition and health field specialists; and Laura Sternweis, ISU Extension communication specialist. Iowa State University.