



## Healthful Beginnings

The **Super Star Chef** knows that everyone needs nutritious foods and regular activity to be healthy. MyPyramid ([www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)) organizes foods in a way that encourages us to eat a variety of foods and promotes participation in a variety of activities, such as walking, cycling, and swimming. Using the MyPyramid worksheet will help you add fruits and vegetables to all meals and snacks during the day. But the best way to start the day is by having breakfast. The nutrients found in a healthful breakfast helps get your brain and body functioning at its best. It should include a serving of milk, whole-grain bread or cereal, a meat or meat alternate, and, of course, a fruit or vegetable. Let's see how we can incorporate more fruits and vegetables into our diet by including our freshly bought produce into breakfast!

**Definition.** Literally, the word breakfast means to break the fast from the previous night. Traditionally in America, the first meal of the day included eggs, bacon, toast, juice, and milk. Our busy change of pace has also brought offerings of frozen waffles or pancakes, cereal or cereal bars, and of course, fast food. Cultural influences have provided additional options, such as burritos, exotic fruit, and sushi. Thinking outside of the box a little bit will allow you to enjoy a variety of nontraditional breakfast items, including fruits and vegetables from your local farmers market.

**Research.** The importance of breakfast can not be stressed enough. Research has shown there is a solid connection between eating a healthy breakfast and success in school. Eating a whole-grain cereal, milk, and citrus juice can provide 100 percent of the vitamin C your body needs, 33 percent of the calcium, thiamin, and riboflavin, and a good supply of fiber, iron, and other needed nutrients for the day. It's difficult for breakfast skippers to make up these nutrients throughout the day. Besides contributing adequate nutrients and energy for proper growth, regular eaters of a healthy breakfast achieved higher scores

on standardized tests, were more alert, creative and attentive, and had other improved skills important for academic success, including less discipline problems (USDA, 2002). Eating breakfast may help adults maintain their weight, take in less fat and cholesterol, and have better concentration and memory recall (Bogalusa Heart Study, 1973-2005).



### Blood Glucose

**Levels.** Breakfast may also just help us feel better. After eight to 12 hours without a meal, your body, including your

brain, needs a new supply of glucose, also known as blood sugar stores. Low blood glucose levels can cause many symptoms from headaches, to feeling tired, to experiencing gnawing hunger pains by mid-morning. A healthy breakfast will help keep your glucose levels stable until lunch, while a quick donut, candy bar, or cup of coffee will just be a quick fix, causing your blood glucose levels to spike and drop (Whitney & Rolfes, **Understanding Nutrition**, 2004). Breakfast helps us begin the day with enough energy to be able to think, play, or work.

**More Fruits and Vegetables.** Most people do not eat enough fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are an excellent source of many nutrients, including vitamins A and C, potassium, and dietary fiber. They are naturally low in calories, fat, and cholesterol. Choosing from the rainbow of colors found in fruits and vegetables can improve your diet and your health. Fresh peaches are a natural food, packed with vitamins and minerals. But a slice of peach pie has less than one peach and lots of added sugar and fat. What fruits and vegetables do you already enjoy? Now let's brainstorm how you can include a few more servings per day, starting with breakfast!



### Add a Rainbow

- To cooked cereal, blend in chopped fruit (apple, peach, banana, kiwi).
- Top whole grain cereal with fresh fruit from the farmers market.
- Add fruit to fruit juice, milk, or yogurt and blend for a fruit smoothie.
- Add berries or other fruit to pancake batter. Grated carrot and zucchini work well, too.
- Add fresh fruit to your yogurt.
- Add low-fat frozen yogurt to a melon half.
- Make a yogurt sundae by layering fruit, cereal, and yogurt.
- Top apple or pear slices with cheese.
- Try baked bagel chips with salsa, made from fresh ingredients from the farmers market.
- Broil a bagel topped with apple or pear slices, sprinkled with cinnamon, and low-fat cheese.
- Try using mashed avocado as a spread for bread.
- Add applesauce to a peanut butter sandwich.
- Try raw vegetables with a cottage cheese or yogurt dip.
- Add diced vegetables to a soft tortilla to make a vegetable quesadilla or a breakfast burrito.
- Add diced vegetables on an English muffin to make a vegetable pizza.
- Stuff pita bread with lettuce, tomato, cucumber, and low-fat salad dressing.
- Try dipping strips of toast or waffles in applesauce.
- Add your favorite chopped vegetables to an omelet, quiche, or frittata.
- Top an omelet with chutney or salsa, made from fresh fruits or vegetables from the farmers market.
- Add fruit to your favorite muffin recipe.
- 100 percent fruit juice is a good dietary choice, but whole fruit contains additional dietary fiber.
- Bake or steam an apple or pear.
- Steaming hot vegetable soup may be better than you think for breakfast!



**Super Star Chef** is a joint effort of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development.



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