

[IMAGE]

High-Fiber Breakfast Helps Girls Maintain Healthy Weight

For decades, doctors have stressed the importance of having a healthy, nutritious breakfast each morning. This is especially important for children, as a good breakfast provides nutritional benefits, establishes good eating patterns, and can lead to improvements in learning and thinking skills. A new study has found that eating regular breakfasts consisting of high-fiber foods such as cereal not only gives children plenty of vitamins and minerals; it also helps them maintain their weight during adolescence.

In the study, scientists tracked the eating habits and weights of 2,379 girls over a 10-year span. At various times each year, the girls were asked to complete a three-day food record, which the scientists used to document how frequently they ate breakfast (including cereals versus other foods), along with intakes of fat, fiber, calcium, iron, folic acid, vitamin C, and zinc.

Girls who ate breakfast cereal at least three days a week had an average body mass index of under 25. In comparison, the average BMI of girls who never ate breakfast had an average BMI of 27. The researchers also found that on average, the fat content in cereal breakfasts 60.4 percent lower than in noncereal breakfasts.

Although this study focused on weight control, a high-fiber diet has been shown to give additional benefits, such as lowered blood cholesterol levels and a reduced risk of heart disease. In addition to fiber, good sources of dietary fiber include nuts, whole grains, and most fruits and vegetables. Make sure to incorporate these items into your diet whenever possible - your body will thank you for the effort!

Barton BA, Eldridge AL, Thompson D, et al. The relationship of breakfast and cereal consumption to nutrient intake and body mass index: The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Growth and Health Study. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, September 2005;105:1383-89.

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