"Breakfast is the most important meal of the day."

Your mother always told you that breakfast was the most important meal of the day and believe it or not, research shows she was right! Studies have shown that when children have breakfast, they are more alert and participate more fully in the day's activities.

Breakfast is a very simple meal and does not have to be time consuming or costly to prepare. To make breakfast easy, use the guidance from ChooseMyPlate:

Eat foods from the grain group (bread, cereal, rice, or pasta), selecting whole grains when possible. Make sure to have a source of protein (cheese, meat, egg, peanut butter) and include fresh fruit or vegetables. If fruit juice is offered, it should be 100% juice and limited to 4-6 ounces per day.

Fresh fruit or a glass of fruit juice (no more than 4 ounces per day) is a healthy "fast food." Children need 2 to 3 cups of milk every day. Breakfast is a good time to drink milk or have other dairy products such as yogurt and cheese.

Notes:
Between the ages of 1 and 2, whole fat dairy foods should be served. After the age of 2, lower-fat versions of dairy products are recommended.

There are many alternatives available to peanut butter, including almond, cashew, soy, and sunflower seed butters. Feel free to use these as substitutes for peanut butter.

FOR A GREAT BREAKFAST, TRY PUTTING A FEW OF THESE FOODS TOGETHER:

- Cereal with 1% milk or nonfat milk
- Whole wheat bread, English muffins, pita bread, or bagels
- Peanut butter on whole wheat bread or crackers
- Low-fat cottage cheese with fruit
- Eggs
- 100% fruit juice
- Fresh fruit
- Low-fat cottage cheese or ricotta cheese
- Low-fat yogurt with fresh fruit
- Frozen waffles, pancakes, or French toast with applesauce topping

BREAK AWAY FROM TRADITIONAL "BREAKFAST" FOODS.
Many foods can be included in a nutritious breakfast. Try some of the following with a glass of milk for a quick, nutritious breakfast:

- Turkey or chicken sandwich with fruit
- Spaghetti with tomato sauce
- Peanut butter and jelly on whole wheat toast
- Cornbread with applesauce
- Tuna on toast and fruit
- Grilled cheese and fruit
- Macaroni and cheese with fruit
- Egg sandwich and fruit
- Low-fat yogurt with fruit or granola
- Low-fat cottage cheese with fruit
- Celery stuffed with peanut butter
- Frozen waffles, pancakes, or French toast with applesauce topping
- Try different breads such as bagels, low-fat muffins, English muffins, pita bread, whole wheat bread, or rolls.
- Use a variety of fruits in season: grapes, bananas, apples, kiwi, berries, grapefruits, oranges, tangerines, or melons.
FAMILY-TIME OPPORTUNITY
Busy parents or caregivers who are looking for ways to regain control of their family life can claim breakfast as a time to be together with their children.

Breakfast is a great time for families to check schedules, share words of advice, or discuss an upcoming event. A good breakfast will get everyone in the family started off on the right foot for the day.

For additional information on ChooseMyPlate for preschoolers, go to www.choosemyplate.gov/kids.

CHANGES, CHOICES, AND ROUTINES TO MAKE BREAKFAST RUN SMOOTHLY
- Get clothes ready the night before.
- Allow time for breakfast—wake up ten minutes earlier!
- Sit down together at the table.
- Keep the menu simple, but provide enough choices to please everyone's taste.
- Avoid controversial table conversation—promote the positive.

Try these recipes for breakfast alternatives children will love:

BREAKFAST PIZZA
1 whole regular or 2 mini pitas
4 Tablespoons low-fat ricotta or cottage cheese*
1 small apple
1 medium banana
2 teaspoons sugar
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
2 Tablespoons raisins (optional)
* 4 Tablespoons peanut butter can be substituted for the ricotta or cottage cheese. Leave out the sugar and cinnamon. Follow the same directions.

Preheat oven to 400°F. Slice pita bread through the middle to make rounds. Spread 2 tablespoons ricotta or cottage cheese on each half of the pita bread. Thinly slice the apple and the banana. Place 1/2 the sliced apple and 1/2 the sliced banana on each piece of the pita. Sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of sugar and 1/8 teaspoon of cinnamon on each pita. Place both pita halves on a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 10 to 12 minutes.

MAKES 2 SERVINGS.
Provides 269 calories, 8 grams protein, 7 grams fiber, and 7 grams fat.

FRUIT SMOOTHIE
2 cups of any 100% juice
5 to 6 ice cubes, crushed
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ cup nonfat dry milk powder

Crush the ice in a blender. Add juice, vanilla, and milk powder to the ice in the blender or other container with a lid. Shake or blend well. Pour into glasses and serve right away.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS.
One serving provides 99 calories, and 5 grams protein.

CINNAMON ORANGE BRAN MUFFIN
2 cups bran flakes cereal
1 cup orange juice
1 egg, beaten
3 Tablespoons vegetable oil
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ cup packed brown sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1-½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ cup raisins
12 muffin cups

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a large bowl, mix together orange juice, egg, and oil. Let stand 5 minutes. In a separate bowl, mix together brown sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, and baking soda. Mix wet and dry ingredients. Stir in raisins. Divide mixture evenly among greased muffin tin, or in muffins cups. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

MAKES 12 MUFFINS.
One serving provides 155 calories, 3 grams protein, 29 grams carbohydrate, 2 grams fiber, and 3 grams fat.
PINT-SIZE BANANA RAISIN PANCAKES
2 very ripe, medium bananas, peeled
1 egg
¾ cup low-fat milk
1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
1 cup pancake and waffle mix
¼ cup raisins
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 recipe Warm Tropical Fruit Topping

Break up bananas into a mixing bowl. With back of fork, mash until smooth (about 1 cup). Add egg, milk, and oil; mix together.

In another mixing bowl, mix pancake mix, raisins, and cinnamon. Add pancake mix to banana mixture and stir until moistened. Heat skillet over a medium-high heat. Measure ¼ cup batter and pour into skillet. Cook as many pancakes at one time as you can. Brown the underside of the pancake and when bubbles appear on the surface, carefully flip pancake over and continue cooking for another minute. Slide pancakes onto a platter while you continue cooking the remaining batter. Spoon Warm Tropical Fruit Topping over hot pancakes.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS.
One serving provides 305 calories, 7 grams protein, 2 grams fiber, and 6 grams fat.

WARM TROPICAL FRUIT TOPPING
1 can (8-ounce) pineapple chunks in juice
2 cans (6-ounces each) pineapple-orange banana juice
1 Tablespoon cornstarch
1 firm, medium banana, peeled and sliced
1 orange, peeled and sliced
1 cup seedless grapes

Drain juice from pineapple into small saucepan. Stir in pineapple-orange banana juice and cornstarch, blend until smooth. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, and cook for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Turn heat off and carefully move saucepan to a cool burner.

Mix together pineapple, banana, orange, and grapes in a mixing bowl. When mixture cools to room temperature, about 15 minutes, stir fruit into cooked mixture. Spoon over pancakes.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS.
One serving provides 157 calories, 10 grams protein, and 5 grams fat.

FRITTATA
1 egg
¼ cup flour
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon dried oregano
1 cup 2% milk
1 cup grated mozzarella cheese
3 Tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese

Mix egg, flour, salt oregano, and milk. Pour into a blender and blend until foamy. Add mozzarella cheese and pour into greased pie pan. Bake 400°F for 30 minutes. Top with Parmesan cheese. Boil until Parmesan is slightly melted. Serve warm or cold.

GRANOLA BARS
1 1½ cups granola cereal
¼ cup flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup honey
1 banana, mashed
½ cup margarine, melted
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Set aside ½ cup of the cereal. Mix the remaining ingredients in a bowl. Spread mixture into a greased 11”x7” baking dish. Crush reserved cereal and sprinkle over the batter. Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes. Cool for a few minutes and cut into squares.

MAKES 12 SERVINGS.
One serving provides 187 calories, 2 grams protein, 1 gram fiber and 9 grams fat.
BREAKFAST BARS
6 Tablespoons margarine
3 cups miniature marshmallows
½ cup peanut butter
½ cup nonfat dry milk
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup raisins
4 cups oat o’s cereal

Spray a 9” x 9” x 2” square pan with nonstick cooking spray. In a large saucepan, melt margarine and marshmallows over low heat, stirring constantly. Stir in peanut butter until melted.

Remove from heat and stir in milk and cinnamon. Fold in raisins and cereal, stirring until evenly coated. With buttered hands, pat into pan. Cool thoroughly and cut into squares.

MAKES 12 SERVINGS:
One serving provides 229 calories, 5 grams protein, 2 grams fiber, and 11 grams fat.

CAUTION:
Be aware of choking risks and food allergies when preparing and serving meals and snacks. Think about the size, shape, and consistency when choosing foods due to the potential choking risks in children. Food cut in large chunks, small hard foods, and soft and sticky foods should be avoided. The top choking hazards for children include: hotdogs, meats, sausages, fish with bones, spoonfuls of peanut butter, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, raisins, whole grapes, raw carrots, fruits and vegetables with skins, and marshmallows. Be sure that food is cut in small pieces (no larger than 1/2 inch), grated, or finely chopped. Be sure that children are closely supervised when they are eating.

Do not give honey to children under 12 months of age. Honey contains spores that can cause infant botulism.

Many children have food allergies or sensitivities to food. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, 90% of children’s food allergies are from milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (pecan/walnut), fish, shellfish, strawberries, soy, wheat, and gluten. Carefully read food labels for potential risks and be sure to ask the parents if children have a known allergy or sensitivity.

Dental health is a growing concern with young children, so it is important to keep in mind that starchy, sticky, and sugary foods can cause tooth decay. Children should brush their teeth after any meal or snack, but particularly when you serve these foods.

References:
Choose My Plate, United States Dept. of Agriculture
www.choosemyplate.gov/kids.

SURPRISE MUFFINS
1-¼ cups flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
½ cup sugar
2 cups cornflake cereal
1 cup milk
1 egg
½ cup shortening
¼ cup preserves or jam

Mix together flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar. Set aside. Measure cornflake cereal into large mixing bowl. Stir in milk. Let stand 2 to 3 minutes or until cereal is softened. Add egg and shortening to the cereal mixture. Beat well. Add flour mixture to the cereal mixture, stirring only until combined. Divide batter evenly into 12 greased 2 ½ -inch muffin pan cups. Make a deep indentation in top of batter for each muffin. Fill each with one measuring teaspoon of preserves. Bake at 400°F about 25 minutes or until golden brown.

MAKES 12 SERVINGS.
One serving provides 168 calories, 3 grams protein, and 6 grams fat.

References:
Choose My Plate, United States Dept. of Agriculture
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