

The Appeal of Oatmeal

Oatmeal brings to mind healthful eating and is one of the more appealing breakfast choices for children (and adults!)

What do we know about oatmeal?

Oatmeal comes from oat grains, a cereal grass. Surprisingly, there are several types of oatmeal: rolled oats, quick cooking oats, instant oats, oat flour, oat bran, and steel-cut oats are some of the known varieties.

Quick-cooking oats (rolled oats that have been cut into smaller pieces and rolled thinner, thus cook quickly) are an easy source for preparing many oatmeal-based foods for children. Some nutritionists believe that steel-cut inner portion of the oat kernel, which are usually cut into two or

three pieces using steel discs) are a better source of fiber, but take longer to cook.

Oatmeal is associated with helping the lowering of cholesterol (along with other factors) because of its soluble fibers.

Oatmeal research has shown that oatmeal (a complex carbohydrate) turns into sugar very slowly. It raises our blood sugar slowly by staying in the stomach longer, which decreases our hunger and craving created by other carbohydrates.

The good news:

Most children love oatmeal! And oatmeal can be a very versatile, healthy choice food! Oatmeal is usually a breakfast food, but an oatmeal pancake or bowl of oatmeal, yogurt, and apple with peanut butter would make a yummy lunch, too! Try the following recipes for snack, lunch, and breakfast!

Oh-so-delicious oatmeal

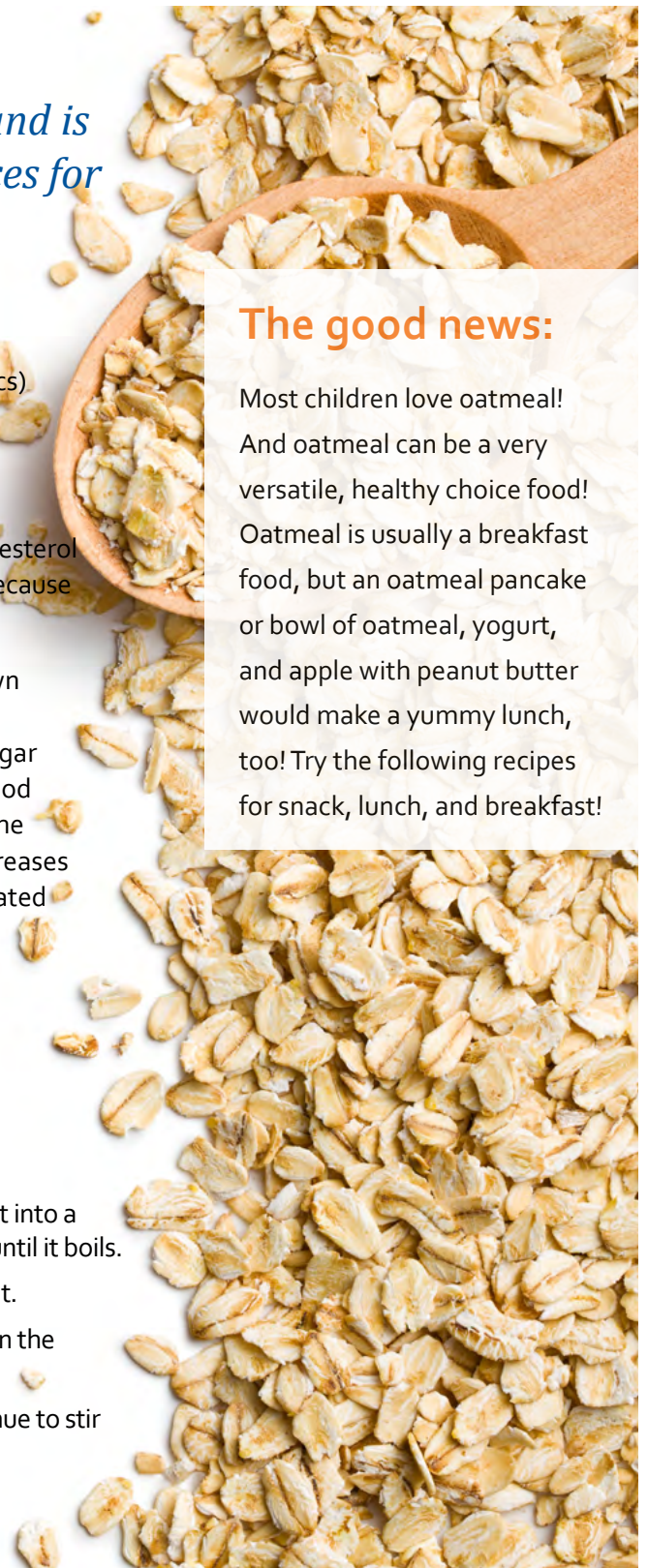
Ingredients:

- 1 cup water
- ½ cup rolled oats or quick oats
- Dash of salt (optional)
- ¼ cup applesauce
- Pinch of cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar

What to do:

- Pour the water, oats, and salt into a medium pot. Heat mixture until it boils.
- After it boils, turn to low heat.
- Using a wooden spoon, stir in the applesauce and cinnamon.
- Cook on low heat and continue to stir the mixture for 5 minutes.

Pour into a bowl and sprinkle brown sugar on top. Allow to cool before digging in.



Fruit & honey granola

Ingredients:

- 3 ½ cups quick or rolled oats
- 1/3 cup coarsely chopped pecans or walnuts (optional)
- ½ cup honey
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) margarine or butter, melted (or ½ cup canola oil)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/8 to ¼ teaspoon salt (optional)
- 1 1/3 cup dried fruit or fruit mix; dried cranberries, apricots, or mixed dried fruits

What to do:

Heat oven to 350 F. In a large bowl, combine oats and pecans; mix well.

Spread evenly in a 15 x 10 rimmed baking sheet.

In small bowl, combine honey, margarine (or oil), vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Mix and pour over oat mixture.

Mix well.

Bake 30 to 35 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes.

Stir in dried fruit.

Cool completely. Store tightly covered for up to a week. Serve as a cereal alone or with milk or yogurt.



Crock pot oatmeal

Ingredients:

- 1 cup steel-cut oats
- 1 cup raisins, cranberries, or dried fruit of choice
- 4 cups water
- ½ cup milk, half and half, or buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons of cinnamon or pumpkin spice
- 2 tablespoons of maple syrup

What to do:

In a crock pot, combine all ingredients.

Cook on low heat (covered) for 7-9 hours.

Stir and serve.

Note: For non-dairy oatmeal, try adding applesauce, apple butter, or almond butter instead of dairy products.

Oatmeal pancakes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup rolled oats or quick oats
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- 2 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs; lightly beaten
- 1 ½ cups milk
- ¼ cup vegetable oil

What to do:

Combine oats, flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt in a mixing bowl.

Combine eggs, milk, and oil; pour into the dry ingredients and stir.

Let batter sit 5-10 minutes.

Pour batter by ¼ cupfuls onto a lightly greased hot griddle or pan; turn when bubbles form on top of pancakes.

Cook until second side is golden.

Note: Try adding fruit (blueberries, bananas, and dried fruit) or cinnamon for some zing!

Dietary cautions

- 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 ½ 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/walnuts), 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.

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