

Breakfast for Champions!

Plenty of research demonstrates that a healthy, balanced breakfast has many benefits (i.e. better weight management and increased focus and concentration resulting in higher academic achievement). If you aren't convinced, see my handout on "*Reasons to Not Skip Breakfast*".

This is especially true for the student athlete, who typically endures a long, demanding school day, with limited opportunities for fueling before a rigorous afternoon training or workout.

Unfortunately, there are 3 potential pitfalls for student athletes who skip or skimp on breakfast:

1) Athletes have higher cravings for sweets (a sign that your body is too hungry) and seek out candy or other less healthy sources of quick energy before practice.

2) A cycle of under-eating and over-eating results in the majority of the athlete's calories being consumed in 1 or 2 meals, late in the day, versus the recommended 4-5 meals throughout the most active time of day. This pattern is very hard on the body resulting in increased cravings, compromised immune health, more fatigue, disruption of sleep, and increased storage of visceral fat (unhealthy fat stores around organ tissues).

3) Decreased endurance and stamina during afternoon practices resulting in less than ideal performance. Athletes who are well-fueled with breakfast, lunch and a pre-exercise snack have better mental focus, balance, and overall performance.

So, for those who want the benefits from a wholesome breakfast, but aren't sure what to eat or struggle with time in the morning, check out these simple tips and recipes to get you on the road to success.

3 basic ingredients for a balanced breakfast:

1) Protein, 2) Complex carbohydrate, and 3) Healthy fat

Protein, such as eggs, yogurt, lean meats, fish, cheese, and nuts, at breakfast is vital for overall growth and repair of muscle tissue, while also helping slow down the absorption of carbohydrates and keeping you satisfied until the next meal event.

Complex carbohydrates include foods such as oatmeal, whole grain breads, quinoa, fruit and vegetables. Try to avoid highly processed foods (things with more than 5 ingredients on the label) as they can lead to increased cravings before the next meal or snack. I also recommend including a fruit or vegetable when choosing oatmeal or other wholesome grains at breakfast because fruit and veggies are natural sources of anti-inflammatory chemicals, called antioxidants. Foods with anti-inflammatory properties are crucial for athletes to consume at each meal as they help manage the stress of exercise. So, as the saying goes, "*Get some color on your plate!*"

Healthy fats include nuts and seeds (specifically walnuts, almonds, and chia, sunflower or ground flax seed), nut butters, avocado, canola oil, olive oil, etc. Common toppings for breakfast foods often include butter, cream cheese, etc. These are also acceptable in moderation. Include a variety of fats in your weekly breakfast meals as they add flavor, increase satiety, and you will be adding important vitamins, such as vitamin E – also a powerful antioxidant!

Check out the **Sample Meals** that follow for simple examples of incorporating these 3 important nutrients in your breakfast:

Sample Meals:

Protein	Complex Carbohydrate	Healthy Fat
6 oz. Greek yogurt	½ whole wheat bagel ½ cup mixed berries	1 Tbsp nut butter
Hard boiled egg	½ cup cooked oatmeal ½ small banana	1 Tbsp walnuts
1-2 eggs scrambled	1 slice whole wheat toast 1 cup spinach	1 tsp. butter
<i>Smoothie:</i> 1 scoop whey protein powder 1 cup milk	1 cup frozen berries	1 Tbsp ground flax or chia seeds

20 Quick and Easy Breakfast Ideas:

Smoothies that satisfy! It seems everyone has their favorite smoothie recipe. Smoothies can be very quick, nutritious, and flavorful but to ensure your savory concoction keeps you satisfied without excessive calories, consider these tips: 1) combine 1-2 servings of fruit and/or veggies with a liquid (milk, water, juice, coconut water); 2) add a source of protein (Greek yogurt, protein powder, peanut butter); and 3) maybe a couple extras (ground flax, chia seeds, nuts, or spices). Just in case you don't have your own favorite recipe, here are a couple quick and easy ideas.



1. Fruit and Yogurt Smoothie. Blend 1 cup plain Greek yogurt with 1 cup frozen fruit (banana and berries work very well) and 1/2 cup liquid (milk, juice, coconut water, etc.). Freeze overnight and thaw throughout the day to enjoy in the afternoon, or blend up in the morning.

2. Peanut Butter Banana Smoothie. Blend 1 small frozen banana, 2 tablespoons peanut butter, 1 cup milk, and 1 cup crushed ice (option – add 1 scoop chocolate whey protein).

3. CIB Smoothie. For an extra boost of calcium and protein, combine one packet of Carnation Instant Breakfast with 1 cup milk. Add 2 Tbsp. peanut butter and one small ripe banana. Blend with crushed ice.

4. Tart CherryBerry and Kale Smoothie. Feeling sore and tired? Try adding this smoothie that uses Tart Cherry Juice, known for its benefits of fighting inflammation and aiding in sleep. Start by liquefying ½ cup 100% tart cherry juice blended with handful baby kale. Add 1 cup plain Greek yogurt and 1 cup frozen berries. This recipe uses Tart Cherry Juice available at a variety of health food stores, such as Trader Joes.

Yummy Yogurt. Yogurt is great for breakfast because it's easy to grab and packed with protein to help you stay satisfied longer. Try some of these tasty variations to ensure your breakfast is easy...and well-balanced.

5. Yogurt Parfait. This is one of the easiest breakfasts that provide a great balance of protein and carbohydrates for athletes on the go. Choose a variety of toppings, such as ¼ cup unsweetened granola, 1 tbsp chopped almonds and 1 cup frozen berries. Try choosing fruits that are in season, such as yummy, sweet berries in the summer, flavorful apples or a dollop of pumpkin puree come fall.

6. Tropical Yogurt Parfait. Top vanilla or plain Greek yogurt with ½ cup crushed canned pineapple (drained) and ½ sliced banana. If using plain, unsweetened yogurt, you may want to drizzle with a couple teaspoons of honey and top with shredded raw coconut.

Eggs...not just for the weekend. For many, the idea of an egg breakfast and “eating on the run” doesn’t seem to go together. Considering that eggs are the highest quality protein...*and very cost effective*, it’s worth it to experiment with some of these quick and easy ideas to start your day off right.

7. Microwaved Scrambled Eggs With Veggies. Yes, it is possible to make *really good* eggs in the microwave. And it’s easy! Beat 2 eggs, throw in a microwave-safe container, add 1 handful of your favorite veggies (spinach leaves, mushrooms, onions, cherry tomatoes are a few ideas), and a sprinkle of cheese. Zap the mixture for 30 seconds, stir, and cook another 30 seconds, or until eggs are solid. Prep the night by storing the raw mixture in a fridge until ready to heat and eat in the morning.

8. Breakfast Burrito. Breakfast burritos are full of good nutrition and easy to grab and go. Scramble 2 egg whites, 1/4 cup black beans, 2 tablespoons salsa, and 2 tablespoons shredded cheese, and wrap in 1 small whole-wheat tortilla. Make ahead by preparing a few at a time, wrap in foil, and keep in the freezer until ready to reheat.



9. Super Special Scrambled eggs. This tasty breakfast is packed with good nutrition for the stressed athlete! Simply lightly sauté handful of spinach with 1 ounce smoked salmon. Toss in 1-2 beaten eggs with the spinach mixture and cook through. If desired, melt in ½ Tbsp. cream cheese and season lightly with salt and pepper. Serve on top of lightly toasted whole grain baguette – Yum!!

10. Egg Sandwich. Who doesn’t love a classic egg sandwich? I remember my father-in-law adding a dollop of salsa to his! So use your creativity with this one. Simply prepare 1-2 eggs to your liking. Place between 2 whole-wheat English muffin halves (or toast) with 1 slice of cheddar cheese. Pile on some veggies *or salsa, if you wish*. Wrap in foil so the cheese melts evenly, and enjoy!

11. Egg Muffins. Another great do-ahead that is easy to heat up before running out the door. Simply beat 10 eggs, 1/4 cup chopped onion, 3 handfuls of spinach, 1 shredded zucchini, 1/2 a bell pepper (chopped), 4 slices cooked bacon or ham, chopped, and a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Divide egg mixture evenly in a greased muffin tin, and bake for 20-25 minutes at 350 F. Store in refrigerator or freezer. Zap it for a few seconds in the microwave before serving. *(See another recipe featured below)*

Muffin Madness. Muffins seem to get a bad rap for being only these sweet, carb-laden morsels of goodness. Well, as I like to say, you can have your “muffin” and be healthy too. Home baked muffins made with a variety of wholesome, natural whole grains can be a great way to manage portions and get high quality nutrition on the go.

12. Pumpkin protein muffins with oatmeal. These muffins are packed with a healthy balance of whole grain carbohydrates along with protein to make a perfect morning breakfast or snack. Make a batch the night before and zap in the morning for a warm, tasty meal. *(See recipe below)*

13. Whole-Wheat Banana Muffins. These hearty, wholesome muffins were developed by one of my dietetic interns and make the perfect portable breakfast. The Greek yogurt allows for a slight reduction in fat, while adding a punch of protein. *(See recipe below)*



14. Zucchini Muffins. Make a batch of your favorite zucchini bread or muffins to easily fit a serving of veggies into a delicious baked goods. Toss in some ground flax for a healthy dose of fiber and omega-3 fatty acids.

15. Raisin Bran Microwave Muffins. One of my favorite things for breakfast as a kid was these easy muffins from the microwave. Yup, muffins in the microwave! Prepare the batter ahead of time and leave in refrigerator. Scoop batter into ramekin or muffin cup and microwave on high for 1 minute, remove to take a look, and keep cooking for 30 seconds at a time until the muffin looks firm. *(See recipe below)*

Hearty & Hot Cereals! These recipes use a couple of nature's most wholesome energy boosters – quinoa and oatmeal. Both are full of natural goodness with quinoa providing a complete protein, essential for tissue growth and repair; and, oatmeal delivers a great source of soluble fiber for improving satiety as well as offering a number of important health benefits.

16. Fruity Breakfast Quinoa. Simply prepare quinoa according to package directions, substituting milk for water. Add your favorite spices, such as cinnamon, nutmeg or pumpkin pie spice. Top with fresh berries and chopped almonds.

17. Pumpkin Pie Oatmeal. Skip the pumpkin spice latte and enjoy a more wholesome autumn treat for breakfast. Simply prepare quick oats in the microwave according to package directions adding a heaping dollop of pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice and low-fat milk or almond milk. If desired, drizzle with a couple teaspoons of maple syrup or brown sugar and walnuts for a quick and easy breakfast before heading out the door.

18. Overnight Oats. This popular Pinterest pin makes a lot of sense for anyone who really has no time for messing around in the kitchen in the morning. The night before, combine 1/2 cup milk, 1/3 cup rolled oats, 1/2 a mashed banana (or fruit of choice), 1/4 cup chopped nuts (or chia seeds), and a sprinkle of cinnamon in sealed Tupperware container or 1-cup mason jar. By morning, you'll have delicious overnight oats! These can be heated in the microwave for 1-2 minutes if in the mood for something warm.

Which “wich”? These creative “sandwiches” combine balanced nutrition in a handful.

19. Waffle PBJ-Wich. Try this sweet take on a classic breakfast sandwich the next time eating on the go. Prepare 2 whole-grain toaster waffles. Spread one half with 2 tablespoons nut butter and layer 2-3 sliced strawberries or ½ sliced banana on top in place of the traditional jelly. Top with other half.

20. Apple-Wich. This is a perfect pick for apple season, Cut 1 apple in half and remove the core. Drop 2 tablespoons of your favorite nut butter between the two holes, and sprinkle in 1 tablespoon granola. Wrap up the whole apple in plastic wrap and pair with a portable serving of milk for an easy grab and go breakfast.

Featured Recipes:

Egg Muffin Variation

See Recipe at: <http://www.averiecooks.com/2014/05/100-calorie-cheese-vegetable-and-egg-muffins.html>

Pumpkin Protein Muffins with Oatmeal

Makes: 18 muffins Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 12-15 minutes

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups Oats 1 cup Whole wheat flour
1 (15 oz.) can Pumpkin 1/2 cup Protein powder (unflavored or vanilla)*
3/4 Brown sugar, packed 1 1/2 tsp Baking soda
3/4 cup Canola oil 3/4 tsp Baking powder
2 large Eggs 3/4 tsp salt
1 1/4 tsp Pumpkin spice (ginger, nutmeg and cinnamon mixed together)
1/3 cup (plus 1 tbsp) Chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 Degrees.
2. In a large mixing bowl beat the brown sugar, oil and eggs together.
3. Add in the oats and pumpkin.



4. In a small bowl, combine the dry ingredients.
5. Gently mix dry ingredients into oat mixture, mixing as little as possible.
6. Fold in 1/3 cup nuts (if desired).
7. Pour batter into paper lined muffin tins, filling each muffin cup approximately 2/3 full.
8. Sprinkle tops of muffins with remaining chopped nuts (if desired).
9. Bake about 12-15 minutes or until toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean.

* Note: If you don't have protein powder on hand, or would rather not use it, just replace the 1/2 cup protein powder with an additional 1/2 cup whole wheat flour.

Whole Wheat Banana Muffins

Makes: 16 muffins Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 22 minutes

Ingredients:

2 cups whole-wheat flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
4 large ripe bananas
1 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
3/4 cup walnut halves, toasted and coarsely chopped (optional)
Turbinado cane sugar for sprinkling on muffins before baking

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line a muffin pan with liners and set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, peel the bananas and mash with a fork. Add brown sugar, oil, egg, yogurt, vanilla extract. Stir well until combined. Slowly stir in the dry ingredients. Mix until just combined. Fold in walnuts if desired.
4. Fill muffin liners 3/4 full. If desired, sprinkle with cane sugar. Bake until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, about 22 minutes. Transfer to wire rack to cool.

Store, covered, at room temperature.

Adapted from recipe available at www.twopeasandtheirpod.com

Raisin Bran Muffins (Microwaveable)

Ingredients:

4 cups Raisin Bran cereal
2 cups flour
1 cup sugar
2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1/2 cup canola oil
2 eggs, beaten
2 cups buttermilk (or substitute with 1 cup milk and 1 cup plain yogurt)
1 tsp vanilla

Directions:

1. Combine first 5 dry ingredients together in a large bowl
2. Add the remaining ingredients the dry ingredients and mix until combined.
3. Store in a covered container in refrigerator up to 6 weeks.
4. Fill muffin cups 2/3 full and bake at 400 degrees for 15-20 minutes
5. If desired, fill ramekin or muffin cup (placed in microwaveable dish) with batter and microwave for 1 minute, checking every 30 seconds until cooked through.

About the Author: Val Schonberg is a Registered, Licensed Dietitian with a Master's degree in nutrition science and is Board Certified as a Specialist in Sports Dietetics. She is the founder of EnlightenU Nutrition Consulting and enjoys enlightening individuals about food, eating and overall wellness. For questions or additional information, you can check out her website at www.enlightenUnutrition.com or contact Val directly at 612-865-6813.