

FACT SHEET FOR PROFESSIONALS

BREAKFAST CEREALS AND BODY WEIGHT

A regular breakfast cereal habit could be the key to achieving a healthy body weight, with research supporting its association with:

- lower body mass index (BMI), and reduced risk of overweight and obesity,
- improved satiety, and
- more nutritious diets.

Lower BMI and reduced risk of overweight and obesity

A large number of cross-sectional studies have consistently demonstrated that regular breakfast cereal consumption is associated with lower measures of overweight or obesity, compared to skipping breakfast or eating other breakfast foods. In summary:

- regular breakfast cereal consumption is associated with a lower BMI and a reduced risk of being overweight or obese in both adults and children (Grade B evidence)¹
- eating breakfast cereal as a snack or meal replacement can assist in weight loss in adults (Grade B evidence)¹
- children and adults who eat breakfast cereal regularly have lower BMIs,²⁻⁴ and
- eating breakfast, especially breakfast cereal (compared to other breakfasts), is associated with lower BMI.⁵

Improved satiety

Research shows regular consumption of high-fibre breakfast cereals is associated with improved satiety:

- eating high-fibre breakfast cereals improves satiety and reduces hunger after a meal (Grade C),¹ and
- eating breakfast cereal high in insoluble fibre (like those with wheat bran) may result in less kilojoules consumed at breakfast and lunch, possibly due to the high satiety value.⁶

Pre-sweetened vs minimally sweetened breakfast cereals

The relationship between pre-sweetened breakfast cereals and body weight has consistently demonstrated that:

- children who eat breakfast cereal have no difference in their risk of overweight and obesity whether they consume pre-sweetened breakfast cereal or other breakfast cereals (Grade C)¹
- there is no difference in overall daily energy intake or total sugars intake whether children or adolescents consume pre-sweetened breakfast cereals or other breakfast cereals,¹ and
- there is no relationship between the total sugars content and energy density of Australian breakfast cereals.⁷

Nutrient dense and low in kilojoules

- Regular consumption of breakfast cereals is associated with diets that are higher in vitamins and minerals for adults, adolescents and children (Grade B).¹
- The 2011-12 Australian Health Survey confirms that breakfast cereals are nutrient dense foods. Together ready-to-eat and hot porridge styles provide 10.6% of fibre intakes per capita for Australians two years and over, while contributing very little towards kilojoules (energy 4.6%), total sugars (3.4%) and sodium (around 2%) intakes.⁸ Additionally, breakfast cereals contribute significant levels of iron (17.6%), thiamin (18.7%), folate (13%) and riboflavin (12.6%) per capita for Australians aged two years and over.⁸
- An average 40g serve of breakfast cereal contains between 610-670kJ, a modest amount of kilojoules for such a nutrient dense breakfast choice.⁹

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References

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- 4 Albertson AM, Anderson GH, Crockett SJ, Goebel MT. Ready-to-eat cereal consumption: its relationship with BMI and nutrient intake of children aged 4 to 12 years. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 2003; **103**(12): 1613-9.
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- 6 Hamedani A, Akhavan T, Samra RA, Anderson GH. Reduced energy intake at breakfast is not compensated for at lunch if a high-insoluble fibre cereal replaces a low-fibre cereal. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2009; **89**(5): 1343-9.
- 7 Shrapnel B. Amount of sugar in Australian breakfast cereals is not associated with energy density or glycemic index: results of a systematic survey. *Nutr Diet* 2013; **70**: 236-40.
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- 9 Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council (GLNC). 2014 Grains and Legumes Product Audit. Unpublished: 2014.

Interpreting evidence grades

According to NHMRC guidance, Grade A evidence is to be trusted to guide clinical practice, Grade B is to be trusted to guide practice in most situations, Grade C provides some support but care should be taken in its application, and Grade D is suggestive, where the body of evidence is weak and therefore the statement should be applied with caution.

About the Australian Breakfast Cereal Manufacturers Forum (ABCMF)

The ABCMF provides evidence-based, practical information so Australians can have a better understanding of the true value of breakfast cereals and breakfast as part of a healthy lifestyle. The ABCMF is a forum of the Australian Food and Grocery Council.

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Connect with ABCMF for the latest information on breakfast cereals:

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