

NEW STUDY: BREAKFAST CHOICE VITAL FOR CHILDREN'S NUTRITION

A new Australian study has found a significant link between what children eat for breakfast and their intake of essential nutrients needed for growth and development.¹

The Nutrition Research Australia (NRA) analysis, published in the international journal *Nutrients*, reported children who ate breakfast cereal had considerably higher intakes of many micronutrients and dietary fibre compared to children who ate other breakfast foods, like bread and spreads, or skipped breakfast altogether.

Researchers also found teenagers, who have greater nutritional needs, were more likely to have skipped breakfast and less likely to have eaten breakfast cereal – two key dietary factors the study associated with lower nutrient intakes.

Nutrition Research Australia Director and lead researcher Dr Flavia Fayet-Moore said the findings provided strong evidence for recommending breakfast cereal for breakfast, especially to help address nutrient shortfalls.

“Children who ate breakfast cereal at breakfast had the highest intakes of dietary fibre and micronutrients including calcium and iron – key nutrients of which Australian children are not getting enough. They also had lower intakes of sodium compared to children who ate other foods at breakfast,” said Dr Fayet-Moore.

“These nutritional benefits were consistent regardless of the total sugars content of the breakfast cereal eaten.”

The analysis showed six out of ten children who ate breakfast cereal chose cereal with less than 15 per cent total sugars.*

“Eating breakfast cereal is a driver for greater milk consumption, and dairy milk provides additional calcium, magnesium, potassium and riboflavin,” said Dr Fayet-Moore.

“However, one of the most interesting findings was the amount of nutrients that came from the breakfast cereal itself. For instance, breakfast cereals were a large contributor of iron and most importantly dietary fibre. Cereal fibre is essential for gut health and preventing chronic diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.”

The NRA researchers analysed breakfast habits of 2812 Australian children and adolescents (aged 2-18 years) using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics National Health Survey - the largest available, nationally representative survey sample.

Other key findings included:

- The number of Australian children who skipped breakfast (nine per cent) had doubled since the previous survey. Sixty one per cent of breakfast skippers were aged between 14 and 18 years.

*Total sugars includes naturally occurring sugars (i.e. from fruit and milk) and added sugars

- Breakfast skippers had the lowest daily intakes of dietary fibre and most nutrients.
- There was no significant difference in added sugars intakes or energy intakes between children that ate breakfast cereal (regardless of its level of sweetening) and children that ate other breakfast foods.

The analysis showed the most popular breakfast choice among Australian children was breakfast cereal (47 per cent) and among those, most (62 per cent) chose a breakfast cereal with less than 15 per cent total sugars. Only eight per cent of children who ate breakfast cereal chose a cereal with more than 30 per cent total sugars.

The research adds to a large body of evidence that identifies the consumption of breakfast and breakfast cereal may be particularly beneficial for children and adolescents by supporting healthier nutrient intakes and healthier food choices throughout the day, as well as a reduced risk of chronic disease including overweight and obesity.²⁻⁷

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The Australian Breakfast Cereal Manufacturers Forum (ABCMF) is a forum of local breakfast cereal manufacturers committed to providing up-to-date, evidence-based information on the Australian breakfast cereal category. For further information visit cereal4brekkie.org.au