

# FACT SHEET FOR PROFESSIONALS

## BREAKFAST CEREALS AND BODY WEIGHT

**Regularly eating breakfast cereal (ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, muesli and oats) could help in achieving a healthy body weight. Research supports its association with:**

- **lower body mass index (BMI), and reduced risk of being overweight or obese;**
- **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 being overweight or obese, 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);<sup>1</sup>
- Eating breakfast cereal as a snack or meal replacement can assist in weight loss in adults (Grade B evidence);<sup>1</sup>
- Children and adults who regularly eat breakfast cereal have lower BMIs;<sup>2-4</sup>
- Eating breakfast, especially breakfast cereal (compared to other breakfasts), is associated with lower BMIs;<sup>5</sup> and
- A secondary analysis of the 2011-12 Australian Health Survey (AHS) showed that adults who ate breakfast cereals had a smaller waist circumference and were more likely to be a healthy weight, than those who ate other breakfasts.<sup>6</sup>

### **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);<sup>1</sup> 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 its high satiety value.<sup>7</sup>

### **Sweetened breakfast cereals**

Research consistently demonstrates that there is no relationship between the total sugars content of breakfast cereals and body weight:

- 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);<sup>1</sup>
- 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;<sup>1</sup>
- Secondary analyses of the 2011-12 AHS showed no significant difference in daily energy intake, daily total sugars intake or daily added sugars intake between Australians who ate breakfast cereal containing less than 15 total sugars/100g and those who ate breakfast cereals containing 15g or more total sugars/100g;<sup>6,8</sup> and
- A systematic survey showed there is no relationship between the total sugars content and energy density of Australian breakfast cereals.<sup>9</sup>

### **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).<sup>1</sup>
- The 2011-12 AHS confirmed that breakfast cereals are nutrient-dense foods. Together, ready-to-eat and hot porridge style breakfast cereals provided 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.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, breakfast cereals contributed significant levels of iron

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- (17.6%), thiamin (18.7%), folate (13%) and riboflavin (12.6%) per capita for Australians aged two years and over.<sup>10</sup>
- Compared to people who ate other breakfasts, Australians who ate breakfast cereals had similar daily energy intakes, but significantly higher intakes of fibre, iron, calcium, folate and magnesium and lower sodium intakes. They were more likely to meet nutrient targets.<sup>6</sup>
  - An audit of 441 breakfast cereals found that a 40g serve of breakfast cereal contains an average of 653kJ, a modest amount of energy for such a nutrient-dense breakfast choice.<sup>11</sup>

## 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. *J Amer Diet Assoc* 2003; 103(12): 1613-9.
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- 6 Nutrition Research Australia, Breakfast and Breakfast Cereal Consumption Among Australians – A secondary analysis of the 2011-12 National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey, Sydney, February 2016. <http://bit.ly/BfastCerealDataReport>
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- 8 Nutrition Research Australia. Breakfast choice and its impact on added and free sugars intake: A secondary analysis of the 2011-12 National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey, Sydney, December 2016. <http://bit.ly/BfastCerealDataReport>
- 9 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.
- 10 Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australian Health Survey: Nutrition First Results - Foods and Nutrients, 2011-12. Canberra: ABS; 2014.
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## 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 Australian Breakfast Cereal Manufacturers Forum is committed to providing the most up-to-date information for both the Australian public and professionals, as well as correcting misinformation about Australian breakfast cereals. The ABCMF is a forum of the Australian Food and Grocery Council.

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