

**SUMMARY OF NEW ABS AHS DATA ANALYSIS:  
IMPACT OF BREAKFAST CHOICE ON CORE FOODS, DISCRETIONARY FOODS, NUTRIENTS AND PREVALENCE OF OBESITY.**

A new study, published in [Nutrients](#), has examined the impact of breakfast choice on meeting the recommended serves of the Five Foods Groups (Core Foods) outlined in the Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADG), as well as discretionary food intakes, overall nutrient intakes, and body weight.

The unique study, by Nutrition Research Australia, also explores for the first time whether the associations are explained solely by breakfast choice and/or food choices made throughout the rest of the day.

It found Australian adults who started their day with breakfast cereal were more likely to meet recommendations for ADG Five Food Groups (core foods) and recommended nutrient intakes, compared to breakfast skippers or adults who ate other breakfasts.

The secondary analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the Australian Health Survey (AHS) also revealed breakfast cereal eaters had the lowest intakes of both added and free sugars, refined grains, and discretionary foods. Breakfast cereal eaters were also most likely to be a healthy weight.

In contrast, breakfast skippers had the highest intake of discretionary foods, the highest intake of added and free sugars, were least likely to meet the ADG Five Food Group recommendations and, looking at health outcomes, they had the highest mean BMI and waist circumference.

Breakfast cereal eaters had healthier diets at breakfast, as well as throughout the rest of the day, compared to breakfast skippers or adults who ate other foods at breakfast. Specifically, adult breakfast cereal eaters:

- had the lowest mean BMI, waist circumference and prevalence of overweight and obesity;
- were most likely to meet the daily recommended serves of four of the ADG Five Food Groups (grain foods, fruit, dairy and vegetables);
- were most likely to meet nutrient targets and had significantly higher intakes of dietary fibre, iron, calcium, folate, magnesium and potassium;
- had the highest whole grain food intakes (double that of adults who ate other breakfasts, and three times the intake of breakfast skippers) and the lowest intake of refined grain foods;
- had the lowest daily intakes of both added sugars and free sugars, as well as discretionary foods.

**So, what was the impact of breakfast food choice, compared to other foods eaten throughout the day?**

- **Grain (cereal) foods:** Australian adults who ate breakfast cereal were the most likely to meet the daily recommended serves of grain (cereal) foods. They also had a higher whole grain intake, which was mostly driven by breakfast – where they had an extra 1.1 serves of whole grain foods, compared to those who ate other breakfasts.
- **Fruit and Dairy:** Adults who ate breakfast cereal had double the intake of fruit and dairy foods at breakfast compared to those who ate other breakfasts. They also had the highest daily fruit and dairy serves, both at breakfast and during the rest of the day, although differences were more related to the breakfast meal.
- **Vegetables:** There was no difference in daily vegetable serves based on breakfast choice. While non-cereal eaters ate more vegetables at breakfast, breakfast cereal eaters had a higher intake during the rest of the day.
- **Lean meat and protein rich foods:** Daily serves of lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans were higher among non-cereal breakfast eaters than breakfast cereal eaters, and this was driven by their higher intake at breakfast. However, breakfast choice did not influence the likelihood of reaching recommended daily serves for this food group.

- **Discretionary foods:** Breakfast cereal eaters had the lowest discretionary food intakes at breakfast and throughout the rest of the day. At breakfast, non-cereal breakfast eaters had three times the discretionary food intake of breakfast cereal eaters.
- **Dietary Fibre:** Breakfast cereal eaters had the highest fibre intakes, driven by a higher intake both at breakfast and the rest of the day.
- **Added and free sugars:** At breakfast, there was no difference in intakes of added and free sugars between breakfast cereal eaters and those who ate other foods. However, breakfast cereal eaters had the lowest added and free sugars intakes of all three groups for the rest of the day, and as a result, the lowest daily intakes of added and free sugars.
- **Sodium:** Breakfast choice may be driving higher sodium intakes. The results showed at breakfast, breakfast cereal eaters had less than half the sodium intake of adults that ate other foods. Since there was no difference in sodium intake throughout the rest of the day, non-cereal breakfast eaters had the highest daily sodium intakes.

The researchers concluded, “A breakfast cereal breakfast may help to improve the likelihood of meeting AGD Five Food Groups recommendations and increase intake of under-consumed nutrients, without increasing discretionary energy intake”. Further research including intervention studies is required to determine causality.

These findings are important with [obesity rates](#) in Australia at an all-time high and most Australian adults not meeting the minimum recommended number of serves for each of the ADG [Five Food Groups](#).<sup>2,3</sup>

The research builds on previously-published research that shows breakfast cereal eaters have more nutritious diets and have a greater likelihood of meeting recommended nutrient intakes than people who eat other options, or who have no breakfast at all.<sup>4,5</sup>

RESEARCH GROUPS – key characteristics		
<b>Breakfast cereal eaters</b> More likely to be sufficiently active for health, of higher socio-economic status, and choose breakfast cereal with less than 15% total sugars per 100g (62%).	<b>Non-cereal breakfast consumers</b> More likely to be female and consume a bread-based breakfast (52%).	<b>Breakfast skippers</b> More likely to be male, be not sufficiently active for health and of lower socioeconomic status.

This study was funded by the Australian Breakfast Cereal Manufacturers Forum (ABCMF). ABCMF had no part in study design, data coding, analysis, interpretation or the final manuscript.

References:

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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](http://cereal4brekkie.org.au) or call 02 6273 1466.