

Healthy Breakfast Ideas for Older Adults

Whatever you're planning to eat for breakfast is important for healthy aging - and so does *when* you eat breakfast, according to recent research from Harvard and Massachusetts General Hospital.

3,000 adults from age 42 to 94 were tracked for over 20 years, and a pattern emerged of meals being taken later in the day, both breakfast and dinner.

What's So Bad About Late Breakfast?

What's more important is that a healthy, early breakfast is a marker for healthy aging, and not just a point of pride for early risers.

The research found that those who eat breakfast between 7 and 8 in the morning tended to have better health outcomes than those who ate breakfast later. Overall, the research indicated that keeping consistent meal schedules through the day helps maintain healthy body rhythms. Things just run smoother on a consistent schedule, in other words. And they can fall out of whack with an inconsistent meal schedule.

Older adults' 10-year survival rate was 89.5 percent for those who had earlier breakfast, compared to 86.7% among late eaters. Each hour of delayed breakfast was tied to an 11% increase in the odds of dying during the research period.

What About Second Breakfast?

As *Lord of the Rings* fans know, a hearty mid-morning "second breakfast" is essential to a hobbit's day, along with elevenses, luncheon, afternoon tea, and both dinner and supper. This might be great for Bilbo Baggins, but what about us real-world humans?

The second morning meal is also traditional in parts of Europe. School children in Germany get a break at around 9:30 am for second breakfast, which studies have shown benefits their health. For German adults, there's something called *weisswurstfrühstück* for second breakfast - a small meal of poached sausages with mustard and a pretzel, according to German-born Chef Michael Kuefner of the Brightwater Center for the Study of Food.

Sausages and Pretzels? Wait a Minute

Registered dietitian Torey Armul of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics puts it like this: "A calorie is a calorie regardless of when you eat it. But there is some evidence that eating more earlier in the day can be beneficial, which points to the significance of a healthy breakfast and well-timed second breakfast, or mid-morning snack."

In a 2013 study, overweight and obese women who ate 700 calories in the morning for 12 weeks lost 2.5 times more weight than those who ate 700 calories in the evening, even though both groups of women ate the same amount of calories each day. The women who ate more in the morning also lowered their triglycerides, glucose and insulin levels and were better able to manage their satiety.

In the end, your total daily food intake still has to remain within recommended ranges. A smaller dinner accompanied by a larger morning meal can help people lose weight and manage blood sugar; meanwhile, long stretches between meals can lead to overeating at mealtime.

Keep in mind, also: J.R.R. Tolkien's hobbits did *a lot* of walking. You'll want to work in a healthy level of physical activity along with well-timed morning meals.

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Recipe: Healthy Second Breakfast

Mushroom Polenta Breakfast Bowl

(Serves 4-6)

Ingredients

3 cups water
1 cup polenta
2 teaspoons kosher salt, to taste
freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1/2 cup parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed
1 tablespoon olive oil, plus extra for serving
4 oz diced pancetta (optional)
8 oz assorted sliced mushrooms
1/2 medium red onion, thinly sliced (about 3/4 cup)
4 soft boiled eggs
microgreens

Instructions

In a medium saucepan, whisk together the water, polenta and salt. Bring to a boil over medium heat, whisking periodically. Lower the heat and let the polenta simmer, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Continue to cook and stir for about 15-20 minutes, or until the polenta begins to pull away from the sides of the saucepan. Stir in the parmesan cheese and butter.

While the polenta is cooking, heat the olive oil in a skillet. Add the pancetta, and cook until the pancetta is browned. Add the mushrooms and onion, season lightly with salt and pepper, and cook until the mushrooms are wilted and the onions translucent, about 10 minutes. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

Serve the polenta immediately while hot and creamy, topped with the mushrooms, an egg, and some microgreens, with a drizzle of olive oil, if desired.

Source: kitchenconfidante.com