



**Cancer Institute Calls for Something Radically Different at Breakfast**  
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“It is time Americans took a radical look at the morning meal,” experts announced at the American Institute for Cancer Research’s (AICR) International Research Conference last month. To aid the public in a reexamination of what we eat each morning, the Institute issued a new 37-page brochure entitled *The New American Plate For Breakfast*.

“We tend to eat pastries, or egg and fried meat, or sugary dry, commercial cereals because that is what we have always eaten in the morning. But in a society in which overweight and chronic disease are rampant, it may make sense to reexamine our eating habits,” said Melanie Polk, RD, AICR’s Director of Nutrition Education. According to the new brochure, breakfast should be regarded as one of three basic meals that supply sufficient energy to maintain us through the day and at the same time supply the minerals, vitamins and phytochemicals needed to reduce risk of cancer, stroke and heart disease. To play this dual role in our daily diet, the American breakfast may need to be made over into something radically different

Donuts, Danish and muffins provide an excessive amount of refined flour and sugar. “Pastries eaten alone for breakfast will raise your blood sugar level rapidly and then cause it to plummet. The result is fatigue and hunger before the morning is half over,” Polk said. An alternative breakfast should contain whole grain flour and a small amount of protein to stabilize our energy supply such as a whole wheat bagel with peanut butter, or a whole wheat English muffin spread with apple butter and low-fat string cheese.

Eggs with bacon or sausage and hash browns are a second American favorite for breakfast. This hearty classic is high in animal protein and the saturated fat. Studies have shown that saturated fat raises cholesterol levels and contributes to the clogging of arteries. Furthermore, such egg and fried meat breakfasts lack the protective phytochemicals found in plant-based meals. “If eaten day in and day out, this kind of fatty meal can lead to both overweight and chronic disease,” Polk commented. Possible substitutions are a Breakfast Burrito of vegetables and egg in a whole wheat shell; an Italian Strata, made with layers of whole wheat bread, egg, onions, mushrooms and tomato; and a Southwest Frittata, which includes eggs, beans, peppers, onions and salsa.

A third traditional breakfast is sugar-laden dry cereal with milk. Although a grain and milk combination does provide balance, many commercial cereals have an extraordinary amount of added sugar which can leave people tired and hungry in a few hours. The Nutrition Facts label can be used to find a whole-grain cereal that has little or no sugar added. A whole-grain cereal sweetened with fruit, sprinkled with nuts, and served with low-fat milk or soymilk provides a delicious and healthy breakfast.

“There is an easy rule of thumb for creating a well-proportioned breakfast. A plate that is covered with 2/3 (or more) vegetables, fruit, whole grains, or beans and 1/3 (or less) animal protein makes a perfect meal at breakfast, lunch, or dinner,” Polk said.

Among the most popular traditional breakfasts is no breakfast at all. Either because of time constraints or the desire to lose weight, at least 17 percent of Americans regularly skip the morning meal. “Eating a healthy breakfast fuels the muscles for physical activity and improves productivity. It actually increases the rate at which you burn calories. Skipping breakfast will leave you sluggish and will not help control weight,” Polk said.

A series of convincing studies have shown that people who skip breakfast take in more calories later in the day than people who eat three evenly spaced meals. Other studies show that breakfast skippers tend to have higher blood cholesterol levels as well.

For more information, visit [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org) and click on "New American Plate for Breakfast" to read or order the brochure online or call 1-800-843-8114. Additionally, *Shape Your Future...Your Way!*<sup>™</sup> can guide you in ways to improve your eating habits to lose or maintain weight. Contact your local Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) or Dietitian today!