



High-Fat Breakfasts: Not the Answer

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Amidst the on-going interest in low-carbohydrate diets, high-fat sausage and bacon breakfasts have been making a comeback. Yet many fans don't realize that other breakfast choices can bring even better results when it comes to losing weight.

Although high-fat meats are promoted in some weight-loss diets, a large national study of several different types of breakfast found that regular "meat-and-egg eaters" had the highest total daily calorie consumption of all groups studied. The Body Mass Index (BMI, a measure of body fatness) of members of this group was also one of the highest in the study; it was second only to those in the group that skipped breakfast.

Studies like this can't prove that the high-fat breakfasts actually *cause* people to eat more calories all day and to weigh more, only that these things are *associated*. Although this is a new study, it examines food consumption in the early 1990s. Perhaps at the time of the study, those who ate lots of sausage and bacon for breakfast were those who, not placing much value on healthy eating, chose high-fat, high-calorie choices all day long. Possibly, this type of breakfast would not send overall calorie consumption out of bounds – if people then made careful food choices throughout the rest of the day.

But the concern about high-fat breakfasts is not only about weight. Some people who tried meat-and-egg breakfasts for the first time say that they have more energy than they did with

their usual morning breakfast habits. Further questioning shows that many of these people are comparing these heartier breakfasts to former habits of skipping breakfast or choosing a breakfast filled with the refined carbohydrate foods that are low in fiber and supply scarcely any protein. So it should be no surprise that their new, heartier breakfasts leave them feeling better than they had with their old habits.

There is another option. Several studies have shown that people who start the day with a high-carbohydrate breakfast that is also high in fiber report the highest levels of alertness immediately after breakfast and throughout the morning. Men in a study earlier this year reported more hunger satisfaction and less fatigue after a breakfast based on complex carbohydrates than after one heavier on refined sugars.

These breakfasts of less refined carbohydrates tend to satisfy people's hunger longer throughout the morning, too, especially if some protein is included. But that protein can be in the form of nonfat or reduced-fat milk or yogurt, lean turkey, vegetarian breakfast "meat," or even a sprinkle of heart-healthy nuts.

So when you hear people say that they "feel so much better" with breakfasts filled with high-fat meat, remember to ask, "Better than what?" A breakfast of doughnuts and coffee cannot be expected to provide the fuel you get from a bowl of cold or cooked whole-grain cereal, or a few slices of whole-wheat toast spread with peanut butter, with some fruit to accompany any of these options. Even breakfasts with a healthy image may not be as nutritious as you think. Some low-sugar cereals are made of low-fiber, refined grain. And juice provides important nutrients, but it's not adding much fiber to your diet.

You don't have to choose between a breakfast that gets you going and a breakfast that keeps your good health going. Research has linked diets high in meat, which raise

consumption of saturated fat and animal protein, with a greater risk of heart disease, cancer and other health problems. Save the high-fat meats for occasional use, and aim for breakfasts high in the most nutritious carbohydrate foods.

If you need help to improve your eating habits and prevent weight gain, *Shape Your Future... Your Weigh!*[™] can help. Contact your local base Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) or Dietitian for more information.