

Study finds teens who eat breakfast daily eat healthier diets than those who skip breakfast

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University of Minnesota School of Public Health Project Eating Among Teens (EAT) researchers have found further evidence to support the importance of encouraging youth to eat breakfast regularly.

Researchers examined the association between breakfast frequency and five-year body weight change in more than 2,200 adolescents, and the results indicate that daily breakfast eaters consumed a healthier diet and were more physically active than breakfast skippers during adolescence. Five years later, the daily breakfast eaters also tended to gain less weight and have lower body mass index levels – an indicator of obesity risk – compared with those who had skipped breakfast as adolescents.

Mark Pereira, Ph.D., corresponding author on the study, points out that this study extends the literature on the topic of breakfast habits and obesity risk because of the size and duration of the study. “The dose-response findings between breakfast frequency and obesity risk, even after taking into account physical activity and other dietary factors, suggests that eating breakfast may have important effects on overall diet and obesity risk, but experimental studies are needed to confirm these observations,” he added.

Over the past two decades, rates of obesity have doubled in children and nearly tripled in adolescents. Fifty-seven percent of adolescent females and 33 percent of males frequently use unhealthy weight-control behaviors, and it is estimated that between 12 and 24 percent of children and adolescents regularly skip breakfast. This percentage of breakfast

skippers, while alarming, has been found to increase with age.

Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Ph.D., principal investigator of Project EAT, says that this research confirms the importance of teaching adolescents to start the day off ‘right’ by eating breakfast. “Although adolescents may think that skipping breakfast seems like a good way to save on calories, findings suggest the opposite. Eating a healthy breakfast may help adolescents avoid overeating later in the day and disrupt unhealthy eating patterns, such as not eating early in the day and eating a lot late in the evening.”

The study, “Breakfast Eating and Weight Change in a 5-Year Prospective Analysis of Adolescents: Project EAT,” will be published in the March edition of *Pediatrics*, the official journal of the *American Academy of Pediatrics*.

Source: University of Minnesota

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