

Eating breakfast could help obese people get more active

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Researchers Dr. James Betts and Dr. Enhad Chowdhury from the University of Bath's Department for Health studied the science behind eating breakfast.
Credit: Nic Delves Broughton / University of Bath

Eating breakfast causes obese people to be more active, according to the latest research published from researchers at the University of Bath

(UK).

The study, from health scientists based within the University's Department for Health and published in the leading diet and nutrition journal the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, analysed the links between [breakfast](#) and health for individuals classed as 'obese', comparing the results from a fasting group with a breakfasting group.

Eating breakfast did not make obese individuals lose weight but did result in more physical activity in the morning and reduced food intake later in the day (meaning both groups ate similar amounts overall).

Increasing activity is one of the most important ways to improve health in our increasingly sedentary population, so the researchers suggest this could be a key benefit.

These latest results in this obese group build on previous studies from the researchers at Bath into the effects of eating breakfast for a 'lean' population.

Both studies form part of the three-year BBSRC-funded 'Bath Breakfast Project' and, put together, these insights are being billed as some of the most comprehensive to date into the effects of eating breakfast, winning the lead researcher the prestigious Cuthbertson Medal from the Nutrition Society.

The possible links between breakfast, body weight and health was what the researchers wanted to test.

Lead researcher behind the study, Dr James Betts explains: "Despite many people offering opinions about whether or not you should eat breakfast, to date there has been a lack of rigorous scientific evidence showing how, or whether, breakfast might cause changes in our health.

Our studies highlight some of these impacts, but "how important" breakfast is still really depends on the individual and their own personal goals.

"For example, if weight loss is the key there is little to suggest that just having breakfast or skipping it will matter. However, based on other markers of a healthy lifestyle, like being more active or controlling blood sugar levels, then there's evidence that breakfast may help."

Like in the previous study for a lean population, to conduct the obese trial the researchers split individuals aged 21 - 60 into two groups 'fasting' and 'breakfasting' measuring many outcomes during a six week period.

Most existing research is limited just to surveys of vast numbers of people. By contrast this research involved intensive testing of a focused group under tightly-controlled conditions - so the relevant effects on the body can be studied without needing the test thousands of people.

The breakfasting group in this study was asked to eat at least 700 kcal by 11am, with the first half of this consumed within at least two hours of waking. The fasting group were only allowed water until noon.

Whilst the researchers' latest work has revealed the effects of eating breakfast verses fasting, they allowed people to choose what they wanted to eat for breakfast. They now want to conduct further experiments comparing different breakfast types.

From this they hope to make recommendations as to the kind of food sources and nutrients that might work best for health.

Lead author on the new study, Dr Enhad Chowdhury, added: "It is

important to bear in mind that not everybody responds in the same way to breakfast and that not all breakfasts are equal. The effects of a sugary cereal compared to a high protein breakfast are likely to be quite different.

"As we progress the Bath Breakfast Project we want to narrow down the effects of different types of breakfast upon [health](#)."

More information: E. A. Chowdhury et al. The causal role of breakfast in energy balance and health: a randomized controlled trial in obese adults, *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2016). [DOI: 10.3945/ajcn.115.122044](#)

Provided by University of Bath

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