

# Skipping breakfast may increase chance of kids and teens developing psychosocial health problems

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Young people who eat healthy breakfasts at home have better psychosocial health, shows a recent study in *Frontiers in Nutrition*. While previous research has reported the important role of a nutritious

breakfast, this is the first study to look at the reported effects of whether kids eat breakfast, as well as where and what they eat. These results provide valuable insights and recommendations for parents and their children.

"Our results suggest that it is not only important to eat breakfast, but it's also important where [young people](#) eat breakfast and what they eat," said first author Dr. José Francisco López-Gil of the University of Castilla-La Mancha in Cuenca, Spain. "Skipping breakfast or eating breakfast away from home is associated with increased likelihood of psychosocial behavioral problems in children and adolescents. Similarly, consumption of certain foods/drinks are associated with higher (eg, processed meat) or lower (eg, dairies, cereals) odds of psychosocial behavioral problems."

## **Breakfast matters**

In this study, López-Gil and his collaborators analyzed data from the 2017 Spanish National Health Survey. This survey included questionnaires both about breakfast habits as well as children's psychosocial health, which included characteristics such as [self-esteem](#), mood, and anxiety. The questionnaires were completed by the children's parents, or guardians, and the results included a total of 3,772 Spanish residents between the ages of four and 14.

Among the most important results, López-Gil and the team found that eating breakfast away from home was nearly as detrimental as skipping the meal entirely. The authors suggest that this may be because meals away from home are frequently less nutritious than those prepared at home.

The results also showed that coffee, milk, tea, chocolate, cocoa, yogurt, bread, toast, cereals, and pastries were all associated with lower chances of behavioral problems. Surprisingly, eggs, cheese, and ham were linked

with higher risks of such issues.

## Beyond nutrition

Although this study is limited to Spain, these findings are consistent with research performed elsewhere. The availability of nutritious breakfasts at schools would likely influence the results in some locations.

But other factors, such as the social and [family support](#) that young people can receive during breakfast at home, may also play a role in the observed benefits. The authors emphasize the need for further studies to understand the cause-and-effect relationships behind their observations, but they still suggest the usefulness of these results.

"The fact that eating breakfast away from home is associated with greater psychosocial health problems is a novel aspect of our study," said López-Gil. "Our findings reinforce the need to promote not only breakfast as part of a healthy lifestyle routine, but also that it should be eaten at home. Also, to prevent psychosocial health problems, a [breakfast](#) that includes dairy and/or cereals, and minimizes certain animal foods high in saturated fat/cholesterol, could help to decrease psychosocial [health](#) problems in young people."

**More information:** Breakfast and psychosocial behavioral problems in young population: The role of status, place, and habits, *Frontiers in Nutrition* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fnut.2022.871238](https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2022.871238)

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