

## UPSHOT OF SKIPPING BREAKFAST ON OVERALL HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

Most of us underrate the value of breakfast; we may only have a glass of milk, or tea and nothing at all. It may not affect us in short run but has a greater influence in the long run. The children who inculcate the habit of skipping breakfast may develop into lethargic, irritable and obese adults. Insight into the pattern of consumption of breakfast among school going children is of great concern, for diverse reasons. This paper focused on preponderance of evidence suggesting that eating a breakfast is the key to sufficiently balanced nutrients which further has a beneficial impact on both school going children's health and early physical development followed by cognitive competence such as high concentration and good memory span. Skipping breakfast or consuming an inadequate breakfast contributes to dietary inadequacies that are once in a while counterbalanced at other meals of the day but still unable to meet the actual nutrient requirement which it is supposed to. Along with consumption of breakfast, size and composition of breakfast has a vital role to play. Furthermore, suggestions were also prescribed to help students not to skip breakfast for that participation of parents and collaboration of school environment and teachers is must. The conclusion was derived on the basis of facts and researches reviewed and all pointed out the importance of breakfast for school going children facilitating overall health of the children and their performance in school.

**KEYWORDS:** Nutrient Requirement, Breakfast School Going Children

### INTRODUCTION

**“Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.”**

**-Hippocrates, 460 B.C.**

Nutrition lays a foundation for healthy and all round development of children. Well-nourished children are more distinctly possible to get the energy and essential nutrients they need to grow, be energetic, stay blooming and do exceptionally well at school. Healthy eating practices configured in childhood will surely set a stage to help children to grow into healthy adults.

Breakfast has been designated as the most significant meal of the day, contributing fundamentally to daily nutrient intake both macro and micro-nutrients and energy needs, but it also “helps improve school performance empowering students to do better in math, reading and standardized tests” (Murphy et al. 1998, Alaimo et al. 2001 and Rampersaud et al. 2005). If your child feels exhausted or has been struggling to concentrate during the day, give a thought to add breakfast to his or her regime. Consumption of breakfast has been very well associated with better learning and splendid school performance of school going children. In “A systematic review by Hoyland, et al. (2009) it has been confirmed that that breakfast consumption is more beneficial than skipping breakfast, but this effect is more apparent in children whose

nutritional status is compromised. In spite of breakfast's positive credits, many children go to school without consuming breakfast.

Literal meaning of Breakfast is "Breaking the Fast" as the prior meal is distinctively 8-10 hours before rising up in the morning. Breakfast is predominant in re-charging the body by replenishing the nutrients and re-kindling the energy and hence, boosting up the day. If the breakfast is missed, the consequence can be feeling sluggish and fatigued and lead to difficulty focusing and behavior complications in the school scenario.

The negative influence of skipping a meal was also highlighted by Wolfe et al (2000). "Without an adequate daily intake of nutrients from food, the body puts learning on a lower shelf below its need to sustain life-support functions. Therefore, in many cases, skipping a meal negatively affects the body and its learning functions". Wolfe also concluded that "children who eat breakfast have improved attention in late-morning performance tasks, retrieve information more quickly and accurately, make fewer errors in problem-solving activities, and concentrate better and perform more complex tasks."

Energy and essential nutrients, including iron, calcium and vitamins B and C, which are essential for growth, development and good health are supplied by breakfast. Children who don't skip breakfast daily are most predictably to meet their daily nutritional requirements, as a good quality breakfast can provide a child with up to a third of their daily nutrient needs. Children who skip breakfast may not catch up for the nutrients skipped within the rest of the day's intake.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010), "Meal can be defined as an occasion when people sit down to eat food, especially breakfast, lunch or dinner". There are five mostly set meal times in the world. That is, breakfast, lunch, tea time, dinner and supper". Apparently, "dinner are always become the largest or the main meal of the day" (Martin & Chaney, 2006) but according to Davis (2004) one should "Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper". These words clearly states that the breakfast is very important and one should eat an adequate amount during the breakfast instead of other meals. Many other researchers also emphasize the importance of breakfast such as Wright and Larsen (2011) because we need ample of energy in the morning than at night due to the dynamic errands that we need to furnish in the day. Wright and Larsen also stated that, "Studies shows that people who take breakfast perform better at all task, have more energy throughout the day and tend to weigh less". Woefully, Sindeli (2007), in a report on The Future of Mealtimes, revealed that breakfast is 'the most missed meal in Europe'.

Nevertheless, while the first meal of the day, breakfast has been predictably interrelated with health consequences, evidence regarding links to educational outcomes remains nebulous. While a branch of knowledge examines impacts of breakfast consumption on acute cognitive performance in terms of episodic memory, visual searching and concentration (Vaisman et al. & Jacoby et al., 1996 and Cooper et al., 2011). After fasting all night, a developing body (and brain) needs a fresh supply of glucose or blood sugar. That's the brain's basic fuel. As cited by Allison Aubrey in NPR News (2006) "Without glucose," explains Bravender, professor of pediatrics at Duke University, "our brain simply doesn't operate as well. People have difficulty understanding new information, they have a problem with visual and spatial understanding, and they don't remember things as well." Nutrition has a direct effect on neurotransmitters which are important in sending messages from the body to the brain.

Scientifically, skipping meals trigger an enormous dip in sugar levels, in turn, also provoke the secretion of hormones that could compensate for the low glucose levels. This, on the other hand, elevates the levels of blood pressure, setting up migraines and headaches which will further hamper the concentration power of the children. According to Wesnes (2003), “Breakfast helps children pay attention, perform problem-solving tasks and improves memory

Furthermore, maintaining good blood sugar levels is very beneficial for children’s ideal weight. Eating breakfast can also minimize the risk of being overweight or obese, as breakfast is often substituted by insatiable hunger which will lead to gorging on mid-morning snacks that tend to be high in fat, sugar and salt, especially Burger, Coke and French Fries, i.e., the worst side effect of not eating breakfast. An exploratory cross sectional study was undertaken by Garg M, et al (2014) “where more number of breakfast skippers was found to be overweight”. On the contrary, high fiber, carbohydrate rich breakfast help kids feel full longer thus they may snack less and can deceive obesity.

Children who don’t skip breakfast can focus better and have a higher consciousness, helping them to comprehend and learn better. They can also perform much better physically after eating breakfast as there is more energy available to their muscles, especially when Iron is provided through breakfast cereals during early hours of the day. Breakfast has a direct impact on behavior and mood as well, as children have better concentration and aren’t hungry and hence not irritable at all. In the latest research by Vishnukumar S., et al (2017) confirmed that “skipping breakfast affects both the nutritional status as well as the school performance of the students. The study strongly favours that breakfast plays an important role for adequate nutrition of school children.”

Not merely having breakfast matters but the size of breakfast too. According to a study conducted by Benton and Jarvis (2007), “Those who had eaten a small breakfast, on average 61 kcal, spent significantly less time attending to their work than those who had eaten larger meals. The adverse effect of a small breakfast was reversed by the consumption of a mid-morning snack.” Together with size, composition of breakfast is also of utmost notability. Foods can be designated a glycemic index number which is positioned on the relative increase in blood glucose levels they process when the food is ingested. A low glycemic food results in a slower and steadier rise in blood sugar and sustains the increased energy levels for a prolonged duration than a high glycemic food. When it comes to retained brain activities, food that is low on the scale such as whole grains are most preferable. In spite of the fact that a bowl of sugary cereal and a bowl of oatmeal may have the same number of carbohydrates, but sugary cereals get into your body quickly and cause a sudden elevation in blood glucose levels, but the levels then fall fiercely after two hours or so. Oatmeal, on the other hand, is absorbed slowly. So, oatmeal eaters get a slow rise in blood sugar and enough energy to last through the morning. Nevertheless, oatmeal eaters don’t experience a sudden dip in blood glucose levels. A steep dip in blood sugar can bring with it a release of hormones that affect mood. In some children, the hormones seem to affect concentration and memory.

In the study conducted by Mahoneya, et al. (2005) results revealed that “due to compositional differences in protein and fiber content, glycemic scores, and rate of digestion, oatmeal may provide a slower and more sustained energy source and consequently result in cognitive enhancement compared to low-fiber high glycemic ready-to-eat cereal.” These results have paramount practical implications, suggesting the essentiality of what should be the composition of breakfast that school going children should have in order to improve their grades.

## SUGGESTIONS

During the morning rush hours, breakfast falls at the last in the list of priorities, but taking a little time to gobble up something will make a tremendous change in your day. The cardinal aim of breakfast is to feed your child's body protein and energy along with essential nutrients, the child needs to start the day and carry him till lunch. If the child does not have the time to sit and eat, parents can hand over them something handy, finger foods, for example, boiled eggs, whole wheat sandwich, chapatti-roll, fruit yogurt, fruits etc. so that at least they can have something on the go. So, stock up the refrigerator accordingly. Planning really helps, planning the next morning's meal a night before so that you don't waste any energy the next day.

Very rightly quoted by someone, "Children are great imitators. So give them something great to imitate". So, it becomes mandatory as a parent to set an example in front of your children and have a nutritionally sound breakfast every day. So, they can also ponder upon and imitate the same.

A decriptive correlation study conducted by Kawafha (2013) indicated that "Provision of school snacks or breakfasts, and proper nutritional health education may help promoting breakfast habit and healthy nutritional pattern, directing a little time and resources towards improving child health is commonly seen as diverting time away from schools' core in educating the children about importance of breakfast and promoting the same will surely set the ground for a revolution. School set ups can also have a great role to play in the same, for example,

- Teachers are the role models for children by making healthy food choices at school.
- In Class-room situations, non-food items or prizes can be substituted instead of high calorie and sweetened food stuffs. In terms of rewards and reinforcements
- School magazine or newsletter can have a special corner catering only to breakfast and related parents queries and solution by experts.
- School events can be organized mindfully to promote Breakfast as one of the most important meal of the day.
- School canteen should be scrutinized for selling only healthy options for children. Alongside healthy foods should be offered for school parties and special events.
- There could be below benefits of a Breakfast Program in school for students who skip breakfast at home.
- Breakfast with essential and adequate nutrients for growing children can be provided.
- Better health opportunities with lifelong learning outcomes
- Socialisation
- Students active participation and engagement at school will help them associate with school better and adjust better
- According to Murphy et al. (2000), "Schools that provide breakfast in the classroom to all students have shown decrease in tardiness and suspensions as well as improved student behavior and attentiveness.

## CONCLUSIONS

**“Skipping Breakfast is like trying to run a car without gas, you will not get very far.**

**Food is fuel for your body-start your day right.”**

**-Keri Gans**

Eating a substantial and well composed breakfast within the first two hours of waking up is much healthier for school going children. In the school, healthier children tend to be better learners. Children who do not skip breakfast are well nourished and physically fit as there is ample amount of energy available to their muscles. It also restores glucose levels, an essential carbohydrate which is essential for the brain to function appropriately. Poor nutrition keeps children from doing well at school. Besides assuring optimal development, breakfast can improve behavior and mood, as children have better concentration in the class and aren't tired, angry and hungry and also positive effects in skills vital for academic success are amplified on a daily basis which will further decrease lateness and absenteeism

Judicious selection of low glycemic index food will enhance the efficacy of having breakfast and not skipping it by on-the-go breakfast options planned by parents intelligently. Not merely by supporting but actively participating as Trend-setters will help parents accomplish this task with great pride, hence preventing obesity as well.

By the collaborative efforts of both Teacher and school environment we can potentially sustain our students' potential learning abilities and benefitting their social behaviors by supplying nutritious breakfasts and lunches during school days. Amongst the surplus possible solutions, perhaps schools should look first at the nutritional substance of what our school-aged children are eating each day as they grapple through a day of learning. The above given suggestions if implemented correctly assures that the school along with parents will be victorious in no time in battling against skipping breakfast by school going children. Setting up good breakfast habits in childhood and maintaining them gracefully throughout adolescence may be an indispensable factor in reducing the skipping of breakfast in the adulthood and will definitely helpful in lasting it till lifetime. Last but not the least, “Something is Better than Nothing”, eating any breakfast is better than skipping it altogether.

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