

Eating Breakfast May Beat Teen Obesity

Study Shows Teens Who Don't Skip Breakfast Eat a Healthier Diet

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March 3, 2008 -- Eating breakfast every day may be the first step in fighting teen obesity.

A new study shows teenagers who eat breakfast regularly eat a healthier diet and are more physically active throughout their adolescence than those who skip breakfast. Years later, they also gained less weight and had a lower body mass index (BMI), a measure of weight in relation to height used to measure obesity.

"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," says researcher Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, PhD, of the University of Minnesota, in a news release.

Researchers say rates of teen obesity have nearly tripled over the last two decades. Meanwhile, an estimated 12%-34% of children and adolescents regularly skip breakfast, and that percentage increases with age.

Despite those statistics, the role of breakfast in preventing teen obesity hasn't been thoroughly studied. But these results suggest that eating breakfast regularly may be an important tool in fighting teen obesity and promoting a healthier diet.

Breakfast Fights Fat

In the study, published in *Pediatrics*, researchers analyzed the dietary and weight patterns of a group of 2,216 adolescents over a five-year period (1998-1999 to 2003-2004) from public schools in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.


The researchers write that teens who ate breakfast regularly had a lower percentage of total calories from saturated fat and ate more fiber and carbohydrates than those who skipped breakfast. In addition, regular breakfast eaters seemed more physically active than breakfast skippers.

Over time, researchers found teens who regularly ate breakfast tended to gain less weight and had a lower body mass index than breakfast skippers.

Meanwhile, a related study released in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* has found another way to help lower BMI among children. Researchers found that reducing television and computer time by 50% in children aged 4-7 led to less sedentary behavior and a lower BMI compared with children with unrestricted TV and computer time after two years.

Although both studies are preliminary, researchers say the results suggest that encouraging children and teens to eat breakfast and cut back on TV time are important ways to combat teen obesity.

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Sources 

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