

Is your 'healthy' breakfast doing you more harm than good?

From listening to clients tell me about their diets I have come across a common pattern with what people are having for breakfast. When people eat breakfast they have not eaten for around 8 hours so it's an important meal!

Four very popular things to have for breakfast are cereal, toast, fruit juice and coffee. We're going to skim through all four and have a look at why they are not good choices and finally look at a few good alternatives.

Cereal.

The boxed cereal that you purchase from supermarkets and even health food stores are produced by a process called extrusion. The basic processes of this processing are the grains being made into a slurry and then a machine called an extruder forces the slurry out of a tiny hole at high temperatures and pressure. This is where the shape of the cereal is made, this could be animal shapes, O's, flakes etc. These shapes are then carried past a nozzle and sprayed with a coating of oil and sugar.

This extrusion process used for these cereals destroys most of the nutrients in the grains. It destroys the fatty acids, it destroys the chemical vitamins that are added at the end. The amino acids are rendered very toxic by this process. This is how all the boxed cereals are made, even the ones from health food stores which may be even worse for you as they often have more protein which of course is rendered toxic by extrusion.

Boxed cereal also will normally have a high glycemic index. This basically means that the carbohydrates in the cereal will get released quickly into the blood as glucose and result in fat storage, insulin resistance, lowered energy levels and hunger following closely behind.

Fruit Juice

Commercial fruit juice is just sugar water and has actually been more detrimental to the teeth of test animals than sodas! The manufacture of fruit juice is a highly industrialized process. Taking orange juice as an example, the entire orange would be used which means the pesticide sprays are all in there on the peel. The juice is pasteurized under high pressure and temperature which will destroy the vitamins, minerals and enzymes. Even with this pasteurizing process the pressure resistant and temperature resistant fungi and moulds can remain in the juice.

The fact that fruit juice is so full of sugary carbohydrates means that drinking a large glass which is often done very easily, will result in your blood sugar (glucose) levels rising very quickly. Your pancreas will release lots of insulin to make the body's cells more receptive to the glucose in the blood and this allows a lot of the glucose to get stored as fat as that is the only other place for it to go.

If you want to drink juice you should make your own by using organic fruit.

Toast

There are a few things here that could be improved. Firstly the spread you're using, margarine is extremely bad for you. Through a process called hydrogenation, unsaturated fats as oils are hydrogenated which changes their structure to make them solid at room temperature. These hydrogenated fats are alien to the body and cause heart disease, cancer and many more problems. In place of margarine organic butter should be used.

Organic butter from pasture fed cows is a very nutritious food. People have been convinced it is dangerous, when in fact it is a valued component of many traditional diets. It contains lots of vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin E and vitamin K. These fat soluble vitamins are really lacking in the modern diet and should be consumed more. You must not worry about the fat in butter even as the majority of fat is saturated. Fat is compulsory for good health and just some of the benefits of saturated fats are giving shape and integrity to cells, vital role in bone health, protect liver against alcohol and other toxins, enhance immune system and needed for proper utilization of essential fatty acids (omega 3, 6 etc).

Also what you put on top of the butter needs to be addressed. Jams are full of sugar, if its low sugar then they are using sweeteners which are even worst. Most of the spreads are packed full of all sorts of things you don't want in your body. Putting raw honey on toast is a good alternative, or sliced ham or organic free range eggs.

Even if the bread your using is whole meal bread that doesn't mean its 100 percent whole meal. Most are made from a mixture of refined flour and whole meal flour- typically 50 -70 percent white flour, but it can be as much as 90 percent. If you do find a bread that uses 100 percent whole meal and its soft and fluffy like white bread it will have lots of yeast and sugar added. This obviously isn't good, the sugar you already know isn't good and too much yeast can be harmful. Yeast is very hardy and they don't die even after baking. In your intestines they can grow out of control leading to yeast infection or candida. Candida gives symptoms like sugar cravings, chronic fatigue, tiredness, eating disorders and many more. Another reason some breads are not good is because they have had a lot of their vitamins and minerals destroyed or removed during production. With this being the case the body has to take nutrients from the bodies own stores to digest the bread. This can lead to deficiencies.

A good alternative to this common bread is rye bread or sourdough breads made without added yeast. These breads are harder and a lot heavier and may take some getting used to but once you switch you will never go back!

Coffee

A lot of people drink coffee to get them going in the morning but in the long run it is suppressing your energy producing glands which will make you dependent on coffee. Coffee has been shown to increase the risk of stroke and rheumatoid arthritis. Studies have show that caffeine in coffee can raise blood pressure and levels of stress hormones. Among other things these raised stress hormones will make you store fat and lose muscle. Coffee is also a very heavily sprayed crop, so drinking coffee is likely to expose you to a dose of pesticides with each cup. Pesticides have been associated with a number of health problems such as cancers, Parkinson's disease and miscarriages.

If you try to stop drinking coffee straight off you will likely experience symptoms of withdrawal that can include severe headache, fatigue and depression. While your weaning yourself off coffee some things you can do to reduce the chance of harmful effects are to use organic coffee. This will limit your exposure to toxins, and also help the people working in the coffee fields as they will be exposed to fewer pesticides as well! Drink plenty of water to keep you hydrated. Avoid milk and sugar as the sugar is obviously not good and supermarket milk is not good (view my milk article to find out why!). Try to use unbleached filters. With the drip coffee makers, the bright white filters are chlorine bleached and some of the chlorine will be extracted from the filter during the brewing process.

Alternatives.

Some great alternatives are:

Eggs which can be eaten as an omelet, fried on rye bread etc.

Porridge, try to properly prepare the oats by soaking them the night before in acidulated water. This soaking process neutralizes phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors. The vitamin content increases, particularly B vitamins, tannins, complex sugars, gluten and other difficult to digest substances are partially broken down into simpler components that are more readily available for absorption.

Smoothie, made yourself with a blender. You can put what ever you want in. Some suggestions are fruit, vegetables, milk, water, nuts, seeds, oats etc.

Live yoghurt with raw honey, chopped fruit, ground nuts and seeds in it.

Why do you need to eat a 'breakfast food' in the morning? It is just like any other meal and you can eat any other meal! So something like vegetables with a steak and organic butter from pasture fed cows melted on is perfect!

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