

How Important Really is Breakfast?

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In the hectic spree of life, many people do not have time to sit down and eat a proper breakfast. Some choose to skip it altogether. I have usually tried to eat at least *something*, but at times I must deal with nothing as a necessary sacrifice to prioritize other tasks instead. I have noticed that, while I may have been hungry afterward, I did not notice too much of a difference in my general daily performance. This made me question a phrase that I am sure many have heard before, that ‘breakfast is the most important meal of the day.’ I wondered if it is really *that* important, or if the phrase was stretching the truth. What is so important about that key meal that rules it higher than lunch or dinner, and what really happens if one chooses not to eat it one day? It turns out that the phrase was originally pioneered by breakfast brands as part of subtle advertising campaigns before it grew into the common saying many know today. Some argue that the statement is valid, defending it based on how it can improve the cognition of children as well as how it can kickstart one’s metabolism at the beginning of the day. However, do these benefits fully justify the idea that breakfast is superior to the other daily meals? Not exactly. The phrase also hints that running on breakfast is essential to the human body which, surprisingly, is not much different from choosing to skip. As it turns out, breakfast may not be as ‘important’ as the vague statement leads many to believe.

To better understand the truths behind the phrase ‘breakfast is the most important meal of the day,’ it would be helpful to examine its origin, which dates back a little over a century ago in a quote from a magazine. However, in their YouTube video *Is Breakfast the Most Important Meal?*, PBS Origins (2018) found that the magazine, titled *Good Health Magazine*, “Was also edited by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, a physician from Michigan who was also the co-inventor of corn flakes with his brother Will Keith Kellogg.” The invention of corn flakes started the Kellogg’s company, which, over the years, has fostered a variety of cereal brands such as Frosted Flakes and Special K. PBS Origins (2018) goes on to state that, “This doesn’t discount the idea

that breakfast could be an important meal, it just puts an interesting twist on how we got the phrase.” The phrase predominantly being pioneered by a conglomerate so largely associated with breakfast foods makes a lot of sense, especially when understanding the ways in which it became just that—a phrase. Over the past century, Kellogg’s (and other companies) started to include hints to the ‘power of breakfast’ in their campaigns with the primary goal of gaining consumer attention to sell their products. In said campaigns, they would use the idea that ‘breakfast is the most important meal of the day’ to emphasize the value of their products to their consumers. After all, many would love to eat foods that taste great and have health benefits! Over time, these advertisements pushed the phrase mainstream, to become what it is today.

While the phrase is well known by many, it is fairly vague upon first glance. Yes, breakfast is considered ‘the most important meal of the day,’ but why? What benefits do some believe it uniquely brings to the table (no pun intended) that cannot be obtained by skipping? For one, a belief is that it starts the process of metabolism, the way in which energy is formed from food. This is true, according to Christina Ross (2025)’s article *Does Eating Breakfast Boost Metabolism? Here’s What Science Says*: “Eating breakfast kick-starts the body’s metabolic processes by stimulating thermogenesis, which is the process of producing heat (and thus burning calories) after food intake. Consuming a meal in the morning helps restore blood glucose levels after an overnight fast and encourages the body to use energy more efficiently.” Meanwhile, Ross (2025) also notes that “Skipping breakfast doesn’t necessarily slow down your metabolism in the long term.” So, while consuming a morning meal has its metabolic benefits, choosing to not eat it will not have as negative of an effect as rumored.

Another common thought to be associated with the phrase that ‘breakfast is the most important meal of the day’ is the effect a healthy breakfast has on the cognition of children. Personally, I often used to be told by my teachers and parents to make sure to eat a nutritious

breakfast as part of preparation for a large exam or presentation (especially a state exam) and always thought of it to be a sort of no-brainer. I did not understand why they often felt the need to specify eating a nutritious breakfast all of the time on these occasions. In reality, breakfast had a larger impact on the cognition of children and adolescents than I had originally thought. A 2021 study by Humberto Peña-Jorquera et al. was enacted in Chile on 1181 minors:

“The main findings were that pupils who had breakfast before a cognitive evaluation, have breakfast regularly, and consume at least two breakfast quality components seem to have greater cognitive performance than those who do not. In this line, higher cognitive performance was present in adolescents who included dairy products. Regarding their nutritional status, cognitive performance was lower in pupils with overweight/obesity and who regularly skipped breakfast compared to those who did not.”

Based on the study’s findings, choosing not to eat breakfast resulted in a lower cognitive performance, showing that in this case, breakfast is important. When it comes to developing adolescents, skipping breakfast may be a riskier choice rather than if a developed adult chooses to skip it. However, stating that ‘breakfast is the most important meal of the day in part to its ability to raise one’s cognitive properties’ is not exactly true. This is not much proper justification for why breakfast should be considered more important than the other two daily meals; In reality, all three are important as cognition levels also depend on what food one eats rather than solely time.

So, breakfast really is not the most *important* meal of the day per se—lunch and dinner are just as important! According to Joy Manning (2023), author of the article *What Does Skipping Dinner Do to Your Body?* “Dinner is not just a third daily meal. It’s also the last opportunity of the day to give your body the calories and nutrition it needs to thrive before you go to sleep, which for most is the longest stretch in 24 hours they go without food. It’s also a

nightly occasion to connect with loved ones.” Doctors often recommend sleeping for seven to eight hours a night for most people, which is a fairly long time to go without consuming any meal. Lunch is also noteworthy, according to Dr. Brooke Scheller as stated in *What Happens to Your Body When You Skip Lunch, Says Nutritionist* (2021) by Jennifer Maldonado (2021). Dr. Scheller stated that not eating a proper lunch can result in a drop in productivity levels, an unwanted change in blood sugar levels, nutrient deficiency, and/or possible overindulgence later (2021). During the day, skipping one of these three meals will not kill somebody, but it will deprive them of each meal’s key benefits. Breakfast has metabolic benefits, lunch helps progress one throughout the day, and dinner is the last meal of the day. All meals are unique and important in the end.

While breakfast is *an* important meal of the day, the claim that ‘breakfast is *the* most important meal of the day’ is untrue and just a theory stemming from past advertising campaigns from breakfast companies, as no daily meal is more important than the others. Furthermore, skipping breakfast will not kill somebody. It matters more so *what* food one puts in their body more than *when* they choose to put it in their body. This essay has solved my questions I had previously when I had thought about this topic and taught me much more about breakfast than a basic Google search ever could, especially when finding out the origin of the quote. After completing this paper, I still will continue to value breakfast at the same, important level that I always had valued the other meals of the day. However, I now will move on with the knowledge that taking a granola bar and running out the door when I am on a tight time schedule will not have as large of an impact on myself as I may have thought in the past. Everybody can either choose to eat or choose to skip breakfast because of the overall negligible difference and as long as they eat other nutritious meals throughout the day. Overall, breakfast is *not* the king between the three daily meals; lunch and dinner deserve their own flowers too.

References

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