

PENNY SAVER NEWS HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

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Aiming for Sumo Size?

We are officially into the Holiday Season now, that traditional time for putting on a few pounds or more. If you really want to live up to those expectations, here's one good hint to start on: skip your breakfasts! Sumo wrestlers, who have to pack on the pounds and keep them on, always skip breakfast. That way they are hungry enough to really cram in a huge lunch. On the other hand, if you would really, really like to prove the tradition wrong and not have to worry about a bunch of extra pounds by the start of the next year, then be sure to fit a breakfast into your morning schedule.

Study after study shows that people who eat something for breakfast tend to be leaner. They have an easier time taking weight off and keeping it off. They have fewer problems with blood sugar control. They tend to eat a healthier diet overall throughout the day.

Notice, nothing was said about *what* they ate for breakfast, only that they ate *something* when they got up in the morning. That seems to be the key. If you put nothing into your system after an overnight, 8 to 10 hour fast, your body is starving. It's shouting at your brain to feed it, but you've turned off the audio and don't hear it.

Exactly which hormones are involved is still not certain. The hunger hormones, the 'I'm full' hormones, the blood sugar up and blood sugar down hormones, a couple of new messengers from your bones, they all get into the act. But the end results are that, first, when you do eat you're more likely to eat too much. Second, you're more likely to eat foods high in sugars, since they are what will give your body the fastest boost. But they are also the ones that will let you down the fastest too, so pretty soon you're hungry all over again. And it seems that more of what you eat might be turned into

storage fat, to take care of the next time you starve yourself. It's all pounds.

So, what can you eat for breakfast? Just about anything is better than nothing. Beyond that, aim for something that has some grains or starch, some protein and a little fat. A whole grain product with lots of fiber will keep you feeling full longer. Protein will slow down how fast your blood sugar goes up, and how fast it comes down. You won't be as likely to either get the light-headed shakes or feel slow and stuffed.

What shape you want to eat those nutrients in is up to you. A slice of cold pizza will work if that's what quick and handy. A bowl of soup is traditional in some parts of the work, so zap a bowl of (reduced sodium) soup in the microwave. A low fat breakfast or granola bar balanced with a stick of string cheese will work fine too. Some reheated bread pudding or cooked brown rice with a hard cooked egg are other choices. Wrap a slice or stick of cheese in a corn (whole grain!) tortilla and warm till the cheese is soft. Add a slice of turkey and a drizzle of cranberry sauce if you want. Zap a burrito with a whole grain tortilla, low fat cheese and cooked beans.

Drinkable yogurt can be fine if you read the label and choose carefully. Many are high in sugar, color and flavor and low on real nutrition. You'd be better off with a cup of plain or vanilla yogurt flavored with a handful of fresh or frozen fruit.

As the weather cools you might be more tempted by some warm cereal. Oatmeal is the old standby and a perfectly healthy choice. But there are lots of other options on the store shelves now, wheat, millet, quinoa, barley and mixtures of some or all. They have more flavor and more texture than oatmeal, and if you stir in some low calorie syrup and a handful of fruit you're in good shape. Add a glass of milk or a cup of hot chocolate made with milk for your protein.

Here's an easy stove top rice pudding that will do quite nicely for dessert one night and breakfast the next morning. It has rice and milk, you can make it with low calorie sweetener if you want. But remember, the most important thing is to make space for some kind of breakfast, especially as the days get more hectic. You'll be glad

you did come January.

Delicious Stove-Top Rice Pudding

3 cups skim milk

1 cup water

½ cup rice

½ cup sugar or alternative

grated zest of 1 lemon

Ground cinnamon to taste

Combine all but cinnamon in large saucepan and mix well. Bring to boil, reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring frequently until liquid is almost absorbed and rice is tender. It will get thicker as it cools. Spoon into 6 individual serving dishes and sprinkle with cinnamon. Add a sliver of lemon zest and a fresh grape or strawberry for decorations if you want something fancier for dessert. Serve warm or cold. Serves 6.

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