

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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## Happy Holidays - with Breakfast

Some families have wonderful holidays - the children home, the relatives in, and it's all great. Others seem to dread the days - the children cranky, the relatives grumpy, and no holiday spirit at all. No one can wave their magic wand and cheer everyone up. But you might be able to make a simple change or two to keep the children happier and the complaints less frequent. It can even help cut back those extra holiday 5 pounds!

How? One of the easiest things to do is to make sure everyone gets a balanced breakfast. The evidence has gone way beyond Grandmother's wisdom now. Eating breakfast does help us manage our weight. It helps get our brain up and running well earlier in the day. Getting some food energy going into our brains helps us handle the stress and make better decisions. It especially helps keep the children calmer, more focused and less demanding. So make some plans, do some shopping, and be sure you have some good breakfast choices ready to grab.

A good breakfast is more than a sweet roll or couple of Christmas cookies. We've always thought of protein as something that muscle men and weight lifters need. But protein for breakfast helps to keep us feeling full longer. The plate of cookies won't look so tempting if you've had an egg for breakfast. Protein on the children's breakfast plate can help cut back on those impulsive demands and temper tantrums too. Children will handle the holiday excitement better if they are kept close to their usual routine, including breakfast and other mealtimes. Be sure to have healthy snacks on hand. When they start getting too hungry or too tired is when they get cranky and cry-y.

Now before you reach for a pound of bacon, stop! The research and the recommendations all say 'lean protein'. Bacon does not qualify as lean protein. So what does? Eggs are one good choice, depending on how they are prepared. Don't fry them in that bacon grease. Fried in a non-stick pan, eggs are great. Boiled, poached, or as an ingredient in baked dishes, eggs are fine. Unless your doctor has given you strict rules, 3-5 eggs per week is not a problem for the majority of us. It's only when they're cooked in a lot of fat that our cholesterol goes up.

Another lean protein choice can be reduced fat cheese. In a real rush a low-fat cheese stick will do. But reduced fat cheese melted on a tortilla and rolled up is quick and easy to carry out the door. Dairy protein is a very high quality protein that has been shown to help with the weight and keep us feeling full longer. Yogurt is another dairy choice, as long as it is low fat or fat free. Greek yogurt has a lot more protein than regular yogurt, so try to find a brand of that to enjoy. A 6 oz cup has 11 g of protein.

Nuts are another good protein choice, and they don't require any preparation. Both almonds and walnuts have enough protein to keep us feeling full. Their protein and fat mixture seems to be especially helpful for people with diabetes because it slows down how fast blood sugar goes up. But all of us feel better when our blood sugar is not bouncing from low to high to low all day. One recent study reported that chewing whole nuts had a better effect than just using nut butters. Maybe the chewing sends stronger signals to our brains. Maybe it's because it takes longer to chew whole nuts than to eat a slice of bread with nut butter. But go ahead, have some nuts! You'll feel better if you do.

Grains are always a good choice for breakfast. Their quick energy wakes up our brains and gets our metabolism in gear for the day. But just grain is not a full meal. Balance it with protein and some fruit. And for the biggest bang for your meal buck, use whole grains. The fiber, vitamins and minerals are all important for brains, bodies, moods and healthy foods.

Here's a way to spice up morning oatmeal or other cooked cereal with holiday flavor. You can use quick oatmeal, or make it the night before and reheat it in the microwave. If you don't have pumpkin butter, apple butter and apple pie spice will substitute well. Greek yogurt will provide more protein, but an egg on the side will do it too. Happy Holidays!

#### Pumpkin Pie Hot Cereal

½ cup hot cooked cereal (oatmeal, cream of wheat, etc.)

½ cup fat free Greek yogurt, vanilla flavored (or add vanilla and artificial sweetener)

1 Tbsp pumpkin butter (or apple butter)

1/8 tsp pumpkin pie spice

1 Tbsp chopped pecans, almonds or walnuts, optional

Put half the yogurt in cereal bowl. Add hot cereal. Top with rest of yogurt then pumpkin butter. Sprinkle with pie spice and garnish with chopped nuts.