

The breakfast breakdown

Is breakfast really the most important meal of the day? Here's what research reveals.

Colloquially, breakfast is defined as your first meal of the day and is traditionally eaten in the morning upon waking. But what if you wake up at noon on a Sunday or you work the night shift and get up at 5 p.m. — is your first meal still known as breakfast, and is it still considered the most important meal of the day? Answer: It depends on your goals.

If your goal is weight loss, you might want to skip breakfast.



GOAL: Weight Loss or Fat Loss

A recent study published in the journal *BMJ* looked at the effects of eating vs. not eating breakfast on energy expenditure and weight change by reviewing 13 controlled trials that took place over the course of nearly 30 years. The researchers' findings revealed that when it comes to weight loss, breakfast may not be so awesome: Study participants who did not eat breakfast ended

up eating slightly less at the end of that day than those who did enjoy their eggs.

Ultimately, maintaining a calorie deficit is required for fat loss, and if that means skipping breakfast, then skip it. However, if you skip breakfast but overeat later in the day, you're not going to reach your goals. Those practicing intermittent fasting who commonly refrain from eating until long after waking need to be especially careful here. Because if you overeat during your eight-hour feed window, you won't lose any weight — regardless of your fasting period.

GOAL: Strength/ Performance

When it comes to strength, performance and high-octane resistance training, however, breakfast is imperative. A recent study published in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* compared two groups of athletes — one that performed back squats and bench presses two hours after eating a breakfast containing carbs and protein and one that did the same workout having had water only. The researchers found that those who skipped breakfast had less strength and energy during their workouts and performed fewer total reps than those who had eaten a meal.

BUILD WITH BCAAs?

Often when athletes skip breakfast before training, they take a handful of branched-chain amino acids in place of a meal to ostensibly facilitate muscle growth. But before you hand over your hard-earned simoleons to the supplement store, check this out: According to the International Society of Sports Nutrition, research does not support use of BCAA supplements in promoting muscle protein synthesis — *on their own*. To effectively stimulate muscle growth and build lean tissue, you need a steady supply of all the essential amino acids, not just the BCAAs.

Ensure you're hitting your muscle mark by spreading your protein intake evenly between meals throughout the day. Eat a variety of protein-rich foods, and shoot for 1.6 to 2.2 grams of protein per kilogram of bodyweight.

Occasionally skipping brekkie won't have a significant impact on your results, but over time, it could translate to decreased strength and muscle size as your body pulls from its protein stores — your muscles — to provide energy once it uses up all your glycogen and available blood sugar. Also, the less energy you have, the less weight you'll be able to move, the less strength you'll build and the poorer your performance will be.

Outside of your goals, your personal preferences also come into play: If you're someone who can't function or exercise without eating in the morning, then by all means eat. Contrarily, if you can't possibly stomach a single bite of food first thing, then don't eat. But no matter what your personal proclivity, physique aim or daily schedule — at the end of the day, your caloric intake should support all your goals, no matter whether those calories come from breakfast or a midnight snack.

RESEARCH INDICATES THAT IF YOU'RE TRYING TO BUILD STRENGTH, YOU SHOULD EAT BREAKFAST BEFORE TRAINING, AND THAT IT SHOULD CONTAIN BOTH CARBS AND PROTEIN.

