

Breakfast Basics

(Grades 4 and up)



Overview

In this lesson, students will explore breakfast. They will also have the opportunity to prepare breakfast foods and eat together.

Estimated time: 60 - 90 mins

Food costs: ~\$15-\$20 (depends on chosen ingredients)

Learning Outcomes

Students will

- Identify breakfast foods and practice classifying them into the 3 food categories in [Canada's food guide](#).
- Recognize that a balanced breakfast includes foods from all 3 food categories and can be easy to make.
- Prepare a small tasting sample of muesli, an example of a balanced breakfast.
- Discuss barriers to eating breakfast.
- Develop solutions to increase breakfast consumption.

Materials

Equipment

- serving bowls (enough for each fruit, grain and seed)
- serving spoons (for the yogurt and other ingredients)
- small bowls, cups or mini mason jars (enough for each student)
- small spoons (enough for each student)
- cutting boards and knives for each group (if using fruit that requires cutting into small pieces)

Optional: apple slicers for cutting pears or apples

Ingredients

Foods to make muesli (e.g. grains, seeds, fruit, yogurt)

Pick at least one food from each food category. Here are some ideas:

- Vegetables & Fruit: apples, pears, frozen berries, raisins, dried cranberries
- Whole Grains: oat flakes, barley flakes, wheat flakes
- Protein Foods: yogurt, milk, kefir, sunflower, pumpkin or chia seeds
- Optional spice: cinnamon

Breakfast Basics

(Grades 4 and up)

Provide enough so that each student can have 2-3 spoonfuls of each ingredient.
Example: to make a small amount of muesli for 30 students

- 2 x 650 mL containers of yogurt (keep in cooler or fridge at school)
- 2 L milk or [kefir](#) (keep in thermos, cooler or fridge at school)
- 5 apples or pears (washed ahead of time)
- 2 cups oat flakes
- 2 cups wheat flakes
- 2 cups raisins or dried cranberries
- 2 cups sunflower or pumpkin seeds
- Spice jar of cinnamon

Preparation tips

- Ask students to bring a spoon and their own small reusable container/bowl/cup/mini mason jar. Have extras for those who might forget or who don't have access.
- Wash fruit ahead of time or have students wash the fruit at school prior to the lesson.
- Check for food allergies ahead of time (e.g. nuts or peanuts) and choose muesli ingredients accordingly. If there are dairy allergies, offer a fortified soy alternative.

Procedure

1. Introductory discussion

- Today we are going to be talking all about breakfast.
- What is breakfast anyway? (Breakfast is simply the first time you eat in a day.)
- Did anyone have breakfast this morning?
- What did you have for breakfast? Ask for volunteers to describe what they had. Write foods on the board.
- Does anyone know the 3 food categories in [Canada's food guide](#)?
(*Vegetables & Fruit; Whole Grains; Protein Foods*)
Let's practice classifying these breakfast foods from your breakfasts.
- What are some other breakfast foods? What food category do they belong to?
- Generate more examples from each food category such as:
 - *Vegetables & Fruit: apples, pears, frozen blueberries, dried cranberries*
 - *Whole Grains: oatmeal, congee, cold cereal, bread, bagels, muffins, tortilla wraps*

Breakfast Basics

(Grades 4 and up)

- *Protein Foods: yogurt, milk, kefir, cheese, fortified soy beverage, nut butter, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils, eggs, meat, fish, tofu*

2. Let's make muesli!

- Today we are going to explore a breakfast cereal called muesli.
- Show the photo of muesli to facilitate discussion. Has anyone ever had muesli before? How did you make it? Did you know that muesli means “mixture”? You will each have the opportunity to make a small sample of muesli.
- Point out the different ingredients available for making muesli today. Any other ingredient ideas for muesli?

Prepare ingredients:

- Wash hands.
- Divide class into groups of ~5 students.
- Have volunteers set up an ingredients table:
 - Line up serving bowls for muesli ingredients.
 - Place ingredients into the bowls (e.g. barley/oat/wheat flakes, fruit, seeds).
 - Set out and open the yogurt/milk/kefir.
 - Put out spices (e.g. cinnamon) beside the bowls.
- If you're cutting up fruit:
 - Each group needs a cutting board and knife.
 - Have students take turns cutting the fruit into bite-size pieces.

Assemble and taste:

Note: Assembly and tasting are optional! Even if some students don't make or only take one ingredient, being a part of the process is as important as tasting.

- Explain that each student has the opportunity to make their own special muesli sample.
- Each group takes a turn at the ingredients table with their small containers.
- Don't forget to take your turn. Teachers are important role models.
- Add a couple spoonfuls of the ingredients of choice.
- Have students sit down in their groups and eat together.

Discuss and reflect in groups:

- Have you heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day? Why

Breakfast Basics

(Grades 4 and up)

do you think that is? (*provides energy for activities such as: walking to school, phys ed class, sports, recess and concentrating at school*)

- If we know that breakfast is important, why don't we eat it every day? Identify 3 barriers that can prevent people from eating breakfast and brainstorm solutions with your group.

Possible barriers and solutions to discuss:

- Too tired: Make breakfast the night before (muesli is traditionally prepared the night before and left in the fridge); Try to get to bed earlier.
- No time to eat/Not hungry: Pack a breakfast to eat at school (e.g. a smoothie in a thermos).
- No breakfast foods in the house: Get creative with what you have—remember breakfast doesn't have to include traditional breakfast foods (e.g. try supper leftovers); Get involved with the family grocery shopping.
- Exercising in the morning: Have something easy to digest before (e.g. banana, smoothie, milk, yogurt) then a more significant breakfast after. It's important to eat after exercise—be prepared (e.g. pack a peanut butter sandwich and fruit).

Note: If skipping breakfast is identified as a way to lose weight, this is not an effective weight loss strategy. Since weight can be a sensitive topic, learn more about promoting a healthy body image by contacting us at nutrition@bcdairy.ca or visiting [Jessie's Legacy](#), a BC organization dedicated to the prevention and awareness of eating disorders.

3. Wrap-up discussion

- How did you like the muesli? Would you make this for yourself or your family at home?
- What ingredients would you use?
- Is muesli a balanced breakfast? What makes a balanced breakfast? *Dietitians recommend aiming for a breakfast that includes food items from all 3 food categories in Canada's food guide.*
- What were the barriers and solutions to eating breakfast discussed with your groups?

Have each group report back to the entire class with one barrier and solution.

Breakfast Basics

(Grades 4 and up)

4. Journal reflection

Have students do a written reflection in a journal. Prompt their responses by asking them to:

- Describe your usual breakfast. Identify the food categories.
- Do you like breakfast? Why or why not?
- Explain what you think breakfast does for you (physically, emotionally, in terms of learning, etc.).
- If you could create your ideal personal breakfast, what would it be and why?

Extension

Have students share their experience making muesli. Encourage younger students to discuss their favourite breakfast ideas at home with family. To generate discussion, send home or email a photo of the muesli to parents. Have older students consider sharing muesli photos on social media.

More information for Teachers

To offset food costs, find out about [mini food grants](#).

Refer to [Kitchen Equipment for your Classroom](#) for more preparation and food safety tips.

Curriculum Links

This lesson supports Big Ideas and Learning Standards in the Physical and Health Education [BC curriculum](#) and can also link to other subject areas.

Background

Students who eat breakfast do better at school and have more concentration and energy^{1,2,3,4,5}. They are also more likely to get all the nutrients they need compared to students who skip breakfast^{6,7,8}.

BC data on breakfast:

- Overall, 17% of BC teenagers report never eating breakfast on school days (compared to 13% in 2013)⁹.
- Boys were more likely than girls to always have breakfast before school (57% vs. 44%)⁹.
- Girls were more likely than boys to report skipping breakfast in an attempt to control their weight (14% vs. 3%)¹⁰. To learn more about this sensitive topic, check out the [Health at Every Size: So, What's Normal?](#) lesson plan. For further information, take our [body image workshop](#).

Breakfast Basics

(Grades 4 and up)

- The most common reasons for not eating breakfast at home were: no time, not hungry in the morning, and feeling sick when eating breakfast¹⁰.

Want to do more nutrition education with your class?

Explore our other [lesson plans](#) or book a [free 1-hour workshop](#).

Acknowledgement

Thank you to Tammy Wirick, a BC teacher who provided testing and feedback for this lesson plan. Are you interested in providing us with feedback or input for our lesson plans? Get in touch with us at nutrition@bcdairy.ca.

References

1. Rampersaud GC, Pereira MA, Girard BL, Adams J, Metz J. Breakfast habits, nutritional status, body weight, and academic performance in children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2005; 105(5): 743-760.
2. Adolphus K, Lawton CL, Champ CL, Dye L. The effects of breakfast and breakfast composition on cognition in children and adolescents. A systematic review. *Advances in Nutrition*. 2016; 7(3):590S-612S.
3. Hoyland A, Dye L, Lawton CL. A systematic review of the effect of breakfast on the cognitive performance of children and adolescents. *Nutrition Research Reviews*. 2009; 22(2):220-243.
4. Adolphus K, Kawtibr CL, Dye L. The effects of breakfast on behavior and academic performance in children and adolescents. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. 2013; 7:425.
5. Littlecott H, Moore G, Moore L, Lyons R, Murphy S. Association between breakfast consumption and educational outcomes in 9–11-year-old children. *Public Health Nutrition* 2016; 19(9), 1575-1582.
6. Nicklas TA, O'Neil, C, Myers L. The importance of breakfast consumption to nutrition of children, adolescents, and young adults. *Nutrition Today*. 2004; 39(1): 30-39.
7. Condon, ES, Crepinsek, MK, Fox MK. School meals: types of food offered to and consumed by children at lunch and breakfast. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2009; 109: S67-S78.
8. Barr SI, Vatanparast H, Smith J. Breakfast in Canada: prevalence of consumption, contribution to nutrient and food group intakes, and variability across tertiles of daily diet quality. A study from the International Breakfast Research Initiative. *Nutrients*. 2018; 10(8):985.
9. Smith A, Forsyth K, Poon C, Peled M, Saewyc E, & McCreary Centre Society. (2019). Balance and connection in BC: the health and well-being of our youth. Vancouver, BC: McCreary Centre Society.
10. Smith A, Stewart D, Poon C, Peled M, Saewyc E, & McCreary Centre Society. (2014). From Hastings Street to Haida Gwaii: provincial results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey. Vancouver, BC: McCreary Centre Society.