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WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT?

By JEN MURPHY



Jump-Starting Your Day With a Healthy Breakfast

October 11, 2006

Editor's Note: Many of the executives profiled in What's Your Workout confess to skipping breakfast. This week we depart from our regular look at busy people's fitness routines to talk with Ellie Krieger, a registered dietician and host of the Food Network show "Healthy Appetite with Ellie Krieger" and Elisa Zied, a registered dietician and spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association, about whether breakfast really is the most important meal of the day.

The Wall Street Journal Online: Breakfast is commonly referred to as the most important meal of the day. Is there any truth to that?

Ellie Krieger is author of the book "Small Changes, Big Result" and an adjunct professor in the New York University Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health.

Elisa Zied is author of the book "So What Can I Eat?!"

Elisa Zied: It is the most important meal of the day mainly because you are telling your body that you are not starving. It's also an opportunity to get key nutrients like calcium, whole grains, and fiber [into your diet].

Ellie Krieger: You want to get your energy systems going in the morning and in order to do that you need to get your glucose levels, also known as your blood-sugar levels, up to snuff so that your body will be able to perform.

WSJ.com: Does what you eat matter? Is it better to have a chocolate glazed donut or croissant rather than no breakfast at all?

Ms Zied: I know we live in the real world and I won't tell someone that it's better to starve

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than have a donut. It's certainly not the best choice especially because it's high in sugar and low in nutrition. It's not doing the body any good. But I would say have the donut but skip the sugary snack later. Once in a while having a donut as a treat is fine but there are so many other healthy choices.

WSJ.com: *Many people just have coffee in the morning. What are the benefits or drawbacks?*



Food Network

Ellie Krieger

Ms. Krieger: Drinking just coffee in the morning is only making your body work harder at its basic functions. Not only is it compromising the body's performance but consuming caffeine on an empty stomach can also lead to moodiness. It might mask your hunger and you might feel edgy from too much caffeine in the body and no food. When blood sugar dips, it affects the brain and your mood. That's why people tend to lose focus, become cranky or snippy or get headaches when they haven't eaten.

Ms. Zied: I always say to try and drink straight black coffee or coffee with a little added milk, preferably low fat. Milk is a good vehicle for protein and calcium. I know many people who have coffee when they wake up and then eat breakfast an hour or two later. That's fine.

Watch out for those decadent coffee beverages with ingredients like caramel, whipped cream, whole milk and sugar. All of those calories add up. You're consuming a lot of calories, sugar and in some cases a lot of fat and it's not going to fill you up the same way solid food will. Having a banana with coffee or a slice of cheese or a handful of nuts with coffee is much better than just drinking coffee by itself.

WSJ.com: *A lot of people say they don't eat breakfast because they just aren't hungry in the morning. Why is that?*

Ms. Krieger: Clinically I have found that people aren't hungry for breakfast because they are eating too much at night. If you're consuming a five-course dinner at 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. or if you're snacking late into the night, you're not going to be hungry in the morning. And those late night calories are not the calories you want to be consuming. I tell my clients that they should try to wake up hungry for breakfast.

WSJ.com: *Many executives or others that we profile for "Workout" say they skip breakfast. Why does that work for some people? Is it ok to skip breakfast and just eat a reasonable*

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lunch?



Lucille Khornak

Elisa Zied

Ms. Zied: I'm not going to tell someone you absolutely must have breakfast. Many people are rushed in the morning trying to get their kids to school or get to the office. A lot of executives eat very late so aren't thinking of eating again when they wake up. If you can get by with a reasonable lunch that is healthy and packed with nutrients, that's great. But I strongly recommend trying to fit in breakfast.

A word of caution though, if people read this and say I want to start eating breakfast again, they need to take the calories away from somewhere else in their daily diet.

WSJ.com: *What about people who are trying to lose weight? Does it make sense for them to skip breakfast in order to cut back on calories?*

Ms. Krieger: People think that they are saving calories by skipping breakfast but it is not the best habit to get into. It doesn't support an overall healthy diet. Research findings from the National Weight Control Registry have shown that one of the common habits in people who lose weight and who are able to keep the weight off is that they ate breakfast regularly. ([Read the study.](#))

Skipping breakfast also usually leads to grabbing something unhealthy later. I find psychologically that if you eat a healthy breakfast you are starting the day off on the right foot. It sets a precedent for the day.

Eat This

- 1/2 Whole Wheat Bagel with peanut butter and sliced banana
- Instant Plain Oatmeal with sprinkle of brown sugar and walnuts
- Plain Yogurt with low-fat granola and berries
- Whole Grain Frozen waffle with peanut butter
- Two eggs on whole wheat toast
- Whole wheat English muffin with peanut butter, jelly

Not That

- Whole Plain Bagel with cream cheese
- Instant Maple Brown Sugar Oatmeal
- Strawberry Yogurt with Granola
- Croissant

WSJ.com: *What is the ideal time to eat breakfast in the morning?*

Ms. Zied: It's a good idea to eat something, even something small and preferably healthy, within an hour or two of waking up. ... You don't want to drive your metabolism down by going without food.

WSJ.com: *Many people workout in the morning before work or eat before exercising. Is it ok to wait until after your workout to*

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ABOUT WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT

What's Your Workout? Wall Street Journal looks at the lif routines of busy by Jen Murphy Food & Wine an avid runner was a person at Northeast Fitness Center bachelor's degree Northeastern

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Ms. Zied: It depends on the person. If you can, try to eat something an hour prior to working out. ... I tell people to do an experiment

one type of cereal and see how you feel and then switch to a different type the next week to see if it's easier. Some things just work better for different people.

Ms. Krieger: I break my breakfast up into two parts. I have a banana before I work out. Something small like toast provides a good boost for your blood sugar to get your body moving and to give it energy for your workout that is easy to digest. Post-workout is a great time to replenish your body with a great big bowl of oatmeal with nuts and whole grain cereal with fruit or one egg white on whole wheat toast with tomato. Try to get a combination of whole grains.

WSJ.com: *Time is always an excuse people give for skipping breakfast and many fast, easy, breakfast foods are loaded with saturated fats and empty calories. Do you have any suggestions for quick, healthy, breakfast ideas?*

QUESTIONS ON FITNESS

Email your questions on workouts plus suggestions and thoughts to Jen Murphy at workout@wsj.com

Ms. Krieger: The key is to find something that works for you. People say 'Who has 40 minutes to make oatmeal?' but frankly five-minute instant oatmeal is just fine. Nothing is easier than a bowl of grain cereal with low-fat milk topped with strawberries. You can sit down and eat that in four minutes. You can eat that while running to the subway. A whole grain frozen waffle topped with peanut butter is something I eat that you can run out the door eating. Stick a piece of fruit in your bag to eat at the office. That gives you protein, fat, whole grains and fruit. I love hard boiled eggs. A hard boiled egg with a piece of whole wheat toast that you can eat in the car.

Ms. Zied: Breakfast does not have to take more than five minutes. How much harder is it to grab a low-fat yogurt than to grab a donut? Keep fresh fruit at home. Have half a bagel with a pat of butter. Have string cheese or recommend eating some combination of protein and fiber because they are the two key nutrients that give you satisfaction.

WSJ.com: *Are there any breakfast pitfalls to avoid?*

Ms. Krieger: Try to read the labels and when possible add sugar and spice things up on your own. For example, instant oatmeal and spice it up yourself because chances are you won't be putting heaping spoonfuls of sugar and sometimes when you buy instant oatmeal that's what's in there.

A lot of yogurts have so much sugar they're like a dessert. It's better than eating nothing but try to choose a yogurt with low sugar or buy plain yogurt and add honey and walnuts. Granola is another breakfast food that sounds very healthy but is high in calories and fat because of the nuts. I'm not saying it's a bad choice. It's a good choice, but keep the portion

WSJ.com: *Do you recommend a glass of juice for breakfast or with breakfast?*

Ms. Zied: One hundred percent fruit juice can completely fit into a healthy diet but limit the consumption to a cup a day because it's such a concentrated source of calories that it crowds out fresh fruits that could give you a fiber boost. Again, be mindful of calories. You could easily down 200 to 300 calories in a cup of juice whereas a piece a fresh fruit may only be 60 to 100 calories. Even canned fruit in their own juices, not syrup, give you more fiber than a glass of juice.

WSJ.com: *Do bars make a good breakfast alternative?*

Ms. Krieger: Bars can be the next best thing to oatmeal or real cereal and they're easy to eat on the go or stash in your desk or bag. But many bars on supermarket shelves are just glorified candy bars -- very sweet and sugary. I always look at the ingredients and scan for nuts, whole grains and soy or whey protein. The less processed, the better.

Write to Jen Murphy at workout@wsj.com

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