

Breakfast Busters

Pancakes

Whether you get your pancakes from a mix, batter or a box out of the freezer, you are likely to end up with the nutritional equivalent of white bread. There is not much protein in pancakes, but on a good note, there is very little saturated fat, unless you smear butter on them or on your griddle when you cook them. Regarding frozen pancakes, some are better than others are. Most companies now add more [calcium](#) to their mixes (ten to 20-percent of a day's worth) than to their batters or frozen pancakes (five to ten percent). Many mixes also have less sugar but try not to blow it by dousing the pancakes in sweet maple syrup. Use light, or try adding fresh fruit into the batter prior to cooking. You could even make your own home made fresh fruit topping.

Most pancakes are loaded with [sodium](#), largely because they contain baking soda. Baking soda is not a bad type of sodium because it does not contain the ingredient chloride, which is the culprit in sodium thought to increase blood pressure. In addition, the baking soda only adds about 100mg of sodium per serving, which is pretty reasonable.

Aunt Jemima

Aunt Jemima is not 100 percent whole wheat as the label implies but it does contain more whole wheat than white flour. In the pancake mix aisle that is difficult to find unless your supermarket carries Arrowhead Mills or other (small) brand name products that say "Whole Grain" and mean it. If you have Arrowhead Mills available to you, that is the best brand choice for pancakes. Krusteaz Low Fat Oat Bran is an excellent choice as well. Aunt Jemima's frozen pancakes have enough fibers but the source of the [fiber](#) is cellulose and it is best to get your fiber from whole grains.

Waffles

You are more likely to find whole grain waffles than pancakes. All of the flour in Van's 7-Grain Belgian Waffles is whole grain, for example. Several other companies such as Van's, Lifestream and Waffle Heaven make waffles with more whole grain than refined flour. Do not assume however, that whole grain on the front of the package means only whole grains inside. Eggo Nutri-Grain Waffles may be "made with whole-grain" but in truth, they are mostly made with refined grain. But the entire Nutri-Grain line does beat the regular Eggs by a long shot. Many companies have transformed their waffles into vehicles that deliver everything from vitamins and minerals to flax, soy and [omega-3](#) fatty acids.

Flax: Flax is a good source of omega-3 [fatty acids](#), especially [linoleic acid](#), which may help prevent heart attacks and strokes. Look for at least 1,000 milligrams -- that is equal to one gram - of omega-3 fats per serving. Skip brands that do not put omega-3 numbers on the package.

Organic: Look for brands with [organic](#) ingredients if you wish to help protect the planet.

Soy: Soy helps lower [cholesterol](#) if you eat roughly 25 grams of soy protein daily. The government allows a heart disease claim on foods that contain at least a quarter of a day's total (6-1/4 grams) per serving. Keep in mind: It is too early to say whether soy protein or isoflavones protects bones, lowers the risk of breast or prostate cancer or curbs the symptoms of menopause.

French Toast

Frozen French toast is somewhat fattier and sweeter than waffles or pancakes and sticks have more fat and sugar than slices. Whole grains and fiber are scarce and calcium levels are mediocre. All in all, two slices of French toast are close to two slices of white bread with a teaspoon of margarine and a tablespoon of jam.

Breakfast Meals

A breakfast pizza, for those who have never had the pleasure, is a small ordinary frozen pizza with scrambled eggs and bacon, sausage or gravy on top. It is in the same class as Great Starts frozen breakfasts -- lots of saturated fat and sodium.

New on the scene are Uncle Ben's Breakfast Bowls. They are essentially Great Starts, except your sausage, egg and biscuit or your bacon, egg and potatoes (or whatever) are all mixed together into a bowl. The only one that is not brimming with saturated fat and sodium is Seven-Grain Cereal and Fruit. It has seven grams of fiber to offset the added sugar.

Breakfast Sandwiches

Most breakfast sandwiches are not kind to your heart. With [eggs](#), cheese and sausage (or bacon or ham) on a biscuit or croissant, it is not unusual to find 20 to 30 grams of fat, four to 12 of them saturated, in each sandwich.

There are a few exceptions, however. Morningstar Farms makes two meatless Breakfast Sandwiches that are low in saturated fat and are good sources of protein, fiber, calcium and other nutrients. Unfortunately, they contain a bit too much sodium -- 700 to 1000 milligrams each.

Amy's Breakfast Burrito, filled with beans, potatoes, tofu and onions, has a mildly spiced kick. But it contains 540 milligrams of sodium, which is just above the "cut-off" point considered reasonable for one item to contain.

Toaster Pastries

Pop-Tarts and other toaster pastries are very popular due to their convenience and the supposed belief that added vitamins make them a healthy breakfast. Unfortunately for many of us, this is not true. Most toaster pastries have too much saturated fat or too much sugar. Nearly all are low in the "good stuff" such as [fiber](#), [protein](#) and [calcium](#). A good one: The Pillsbury Toaster Bagel Shoppe line is fairly low in both fat and sugar.