

## **Why Teens Need Breakfast**

Teens and breakfast don't seem to go together, that's why you should understand why teens need breakfast. As a teacher and tutor I am appalled at the number of teenagers who don't eat breakfast. Worse, there are some who don't even eat lunch. During school their energy is so low they have trouble staying awake and thinking. Either they are not sharing this information or parents are so busy they are not aware of their teen's poor eating habits.

Feeding teens can be a challenge. Their needs are different from younger children. Teens need to be taught to make healthy choices and appreciate good food. Part of the problem stems from advertising. Images of models make them believe they're too fat when they're not. A study in Pediatrics Suggests that teens who miss out on breakfast are actually more likely to be overweight. Breakfast eating teens tend to be more active. The quality of their diets and attitudes toward food is better.

Teens who skip breakfast have a tendency to overeat later in the day and grab high-fat snacks. Studies show that if they don't eat in the morning they experience a drop in energy mid-morning. This has an impact on grades. In fact, teens who skip breakfast are more likely to be obese as adults. Obesity among children and adults is a growing problem in the U.S.

High school students spend more time in school. Many of these schools do not allow them to leave at lunch. They have more money and more exposure to vending machines. While vending machines aren't always sources of unhealthy foods and drinks, combined with choices at the cafeteria create a diet of "junk food". Many students do not opt for low-fat lunches according to a School Nutrition and Dietary Study.

The excuses for not eating breakfast include not having enough time or not being hungry early in the morning. Both of these are easily solved. First of all, parents and teachers must talk to their teens about the importance of nutrition and why skipping meals can be harmful to their health. Explain the negative side of not eating a proper diet. A Harvard University, Massachusetts General Hospital study discovered that students who eat breakfast have better grades and decreased absence and tardy rates.

### **What You Can Do!**

You can set up a menu that consists of food to go. Some of the items you can include are: fruit and bran muffins, smoothies, granola, breakfast bars and drinks, fruit salad cups. There are even frozen breakfasts your teen can pop in the toaster and grab on the way out the door. All of these can be eaten "on the run" before school. There are really no excuses for teens not to eat some kind of breakfast.