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9 Great Breakfast Ideas for Kids of All Ages

"Consumer Reports" finds that many cereals are more sugary than doughnuts. What to do?

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A bowl of cereal can be less healthful than a doughnut, according to a new ranking of kids' breakfast cereals published by *Consumer Reports*. Eleven cereals ranked by the venerable group had more sugar than a glazed Dunkin' Donut. The culprits include Kellogg's Honey Smacks (nee Sugar Smacks) and Post Golden Crisp, both of which get almost 60 percent of their calories from sugar. Talk about a sugar high!



(Jupiterimages)



Video: Healthful Eating Recipes

What's a parent to do? Registered dietitians know how to eat smart at breakfast—without denying your sweet tooth. This is good news not just for kids but for the many grownups who still love sugared cereal. Sarah Krieger, a registered dietitian who teaches kids how to make a wholesome breakfast at All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Fla., is among them. Right now she craves Cocoa Krispies, which she attributes to being pregnant. Otherwise, her sugary fave is Frosted Mini-Wheats. Here are nine ways to build a breakfast that's both healthful and satisfying:

- **Go for protein.** Study after study has shown that eating breakfast makes for better cognitive performance through the day and less [weight gain](#) over time. To make that happen, a key ingredient is protein, which provides lasting energy. One good choice: peanut butter on a whole-grain English muffin.
- **Fiber up.** *Consumer Reports* considered fiber one of its key ranking criteria, right up there with the amount of sugar. Its winners among cereals marketed to children: Cheerios and Kix, both with 3 grams of fiber per serving, and Life and Honey Nut Cheerios, both with 2 grams. Step outside the realm of cereals marketed to kids, and there are lots of good choices, including Raisin Bran, with 5 grams of fiber per serving, Grape-Nuts, with 7

grams, or Kashi Go Lean Crunch, with 9 grams. Children need at least their age plus 5 in fiber; a 5-year-old should eat at least 10 grams of fiber a day. Adults need 25 to 35 grams, and cereal is a great way to get it.

- **Sugar can help the fiber go down.** Some cereals that have added sugar also have real health benefits: A serving of Frosted Mini-Wheats, for instance, has a whopping 6 grams of fiber, which dietitians say helps make up for the 12 grams of sugar per serving.

- **Look for whole grains.** Not only do whole grain cereals have more fiber, but they also have more natural vitamins and minerals. [Finding good whole-grain cereal can take some detective work](#). For instance, oatmeal in the round box has more fiber than single-serving packaged oatmeal because the instant oatmeal is more highly processed. It almost always has added sugar, too. Better to microwave old-fashioned or quick oatmeal, and drizzle on honey or add dried cherries if you like it sweet.

- **Be unconventional.** Leftover pizza or pasta makes a great breakfast choice, according to Krieger. Add a piece of fruit and a glass of milk, and you're good for the morning.

- **Keep an eye on sodium.** *Consumer Reports* dinged Rice Krispies, but not because it has a lot of sugar—it's got only 4 grams per serving, which is next to nothing compared with Froot Loops, with 12 grams. Instead, Rice Krispies was faulted for being higher in sodium than is necessary, at 135 milligrams, and having almost no fiber (it's puffed white rice). Other cereals heavily promoted to children have up to 270 mg of sodium in a serving, which is a real concern at a time when increasing numbers of children are being diagnosed with [high blood pressure](#).

- **Use sweetened cereals like a condiment.** Layer a little Cap'n Crunch, with 12 grams of sugar and 1 gram of fiber, on top of shredded wheat, with no sugar and 5 grams of fiber, and you've got a not-so-bad bowlful. Krieger likes her Cocoa Krispies atop plain shredded wheat or Cheerios.

- **Beware of sneaky sugar substitutes.** Some cereal companies are replacing sugar with artificial sweeteners so they can say their product has less sugar, according to Tara Gudis, a registered dietitian and spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association. You wouldn't know that unless you read the fine print in the ingredients. Eating supersweet food, even if artificially sweetened, is a bad idea, Gudis says, because once people are used

to really sweet tastes, they're less likely to eat a varied, healthful diet.

- **Eat breakfast every day.** Consistently eating breakfast turns up in study after study as a key part of healthful living, particularly for kids. "I like cereal," says Gudis. "It's a good way to get people to eat breakfast, and if you pick a high-fiber one, you can get half your fiber knocked out for the day." Eat it with milk, and you're getting protein, calcium, and [Vitamin D](#), too.

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Missing the Mark

What seems to be a greater and more important challenge than feeding children fewer calories is getting them to be more active. You feed them nothing but whole grains and fiber, and then you'll see them want to sit through recess instead of playing basketball or running. Kids need sugars, carbs, calories, fats and proteins to promote their energy levels for sustainable physical activity much like adults. If they're starved on any of these fronts, they'll tire out quickly and end up hating the healthy lifestyle that will sustainably keep them fit.

Training the human body how to use up what foods it takes in is far more important than starving it of what it needs to train it. It's better to be healthy and fit with any given weight than to be within ANY weight limit and be malnourished. They should be eating cinnamon toast crunch if that's more likely to get them off the couch and outside than cheerios -- but they need to be eating cheerios and other healthier cereals if cinnamon toast crunch won't get them off the couch.

James of CA

Oct 08, 2008 15:28:48 PM

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good breakfast

Since most people are over weight and your kids eat what you eat, it is a good idea to promote healthier cereals that the general population will at least give a try! Converting the whole

DIXIE OLSON of MN

Oct 08, 2008 14:37:37 PM

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US to raw, no sugar is beyond monumental, so be real and start with realistic goals. I applaud the cereal companies for making higher fiber cereals that are quick, taste good and that their children will eat eagerly! Add some fresh fruit with your breakfast and get the children off to school on time with tummies full and minds ready to learn. It has to be easy for the vast majority for it to be effective! Next encourage your school system to have fruits and veggies, along with more ground turkey and chicken for their protein and monitoring which foods the children actually consume so they can eliminate the ones that get trashed! I noticed that some schools and colleges have replaced their fats with Z-Trim fat substitute with no taste difference and no bad side effects as the Z-Trim is made with grain hulls! There is so much today that we can do to make childrens food consumption good for the body, mind and palate!

Flaxseed Meal

Since I've been eating Flaxseed meal in the form of pancakes, my cholesterol has gone down from 185 to 78. Google Flaxseed meal pancakes to read how.

Tom of WA

Oct 05, 2008 17:17:59 PM

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