

Let's lunch and learn!

September 2026

If you participate in the State Health Plan, you can find a nutritionist near you by logging into your Aetna account.

Dietician visits are covered at 100 percent when an in-network provider is used. Visit www.shpnc.gov to learn more.

For future Worksite Wellness Lunch and Learn events or recordings of previous events, visit oshr.nc.gov/wellness-webinars.



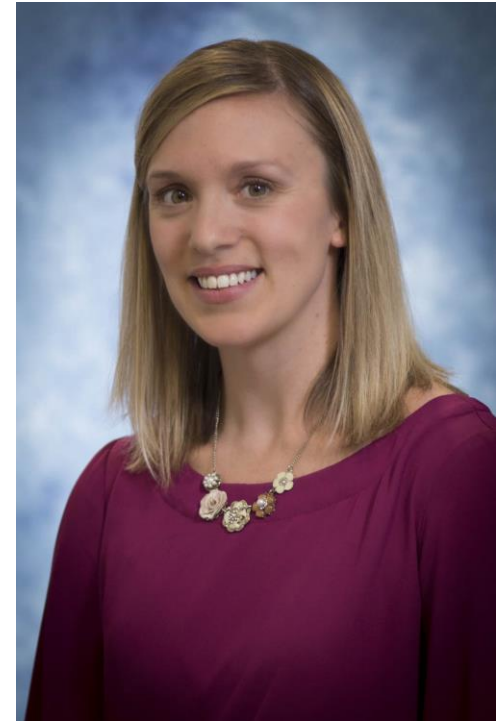


The Importance of Protein At Breakfast

By Katie Godin, RD, LDN

Katie Godin, RD, LDN

- Lifestyle Medical Centers offers Nutrition Counseling to assist with educating you on how to make positive lifestyle changes alongside continual support and encouragement.
- **Services offered:**
 - Weight Management
 - Women's Health
 - Sports Nutrition
 - Chronic Disease Counseling
 - Bariatric Support
 - Smoking Cessation
 - Sleep Assessment and Stress Management
- <https://lifestylemedicalcenters.com/>



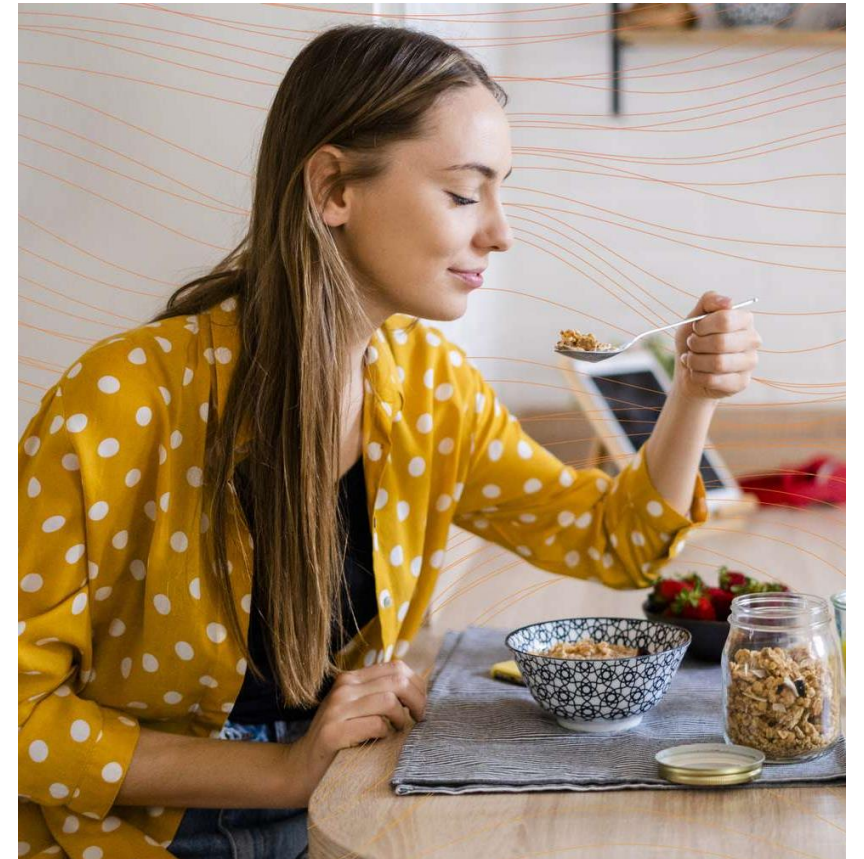
Key Benefits to Having Protein At Breakfast

- Stabilizes blood sugar
- Aids with a healthy metabolism
- Sets the tone for balanced meals for the day
- Controls hunger throughout the day
- Supports the growth and maintenance of lean muscle mass



#1: Stabilizes Blood Sugar

- Slows digestion of the meal
- Buffers the blood sugar spike the carbohydrate rich food can trigger
- Consuming adequate protein at breakfast can aid with blood sugar management beyond that meal into your next meal by improving insulin response. This is titled “The Second Meal Effect”.
- ***Helpful Tip:*** Consume protein / fat sources at first and then lead into your carbohydrate source. This will allow for slower timing of insulin and a more steady rise and fall of blood sugars.



#2: Aids With a Healthy Metabolism

- Higher Thermic Effect of Food which is how much energy is required to digest, absorb, and process food.
- Promotes more stable insulin levels which in turn reduces the likelihood of extra energy being stored as fat. (High insulin levels in the blood signals to the body to store additional energy as fat)



#3: Sets The Tone for Balance At Meals

- How you start your day may act as a behavioral anchor for the rest of your day.
- Our brain likes consistency. Aiming for a balanced meal that focuses on a healthy source of protein, carbohydrate / fiber, and fat will allow your brain to focus on this for other meals in that day without as much effort.
- Alternatively, we can have the opposite mindset if we start our day of with a meal lacking balance. We may decide to have an all or none approach for that particular day and “start fresh” the following day.



<https://cathe.com/macronutrient-balance-important-health-fitness/>

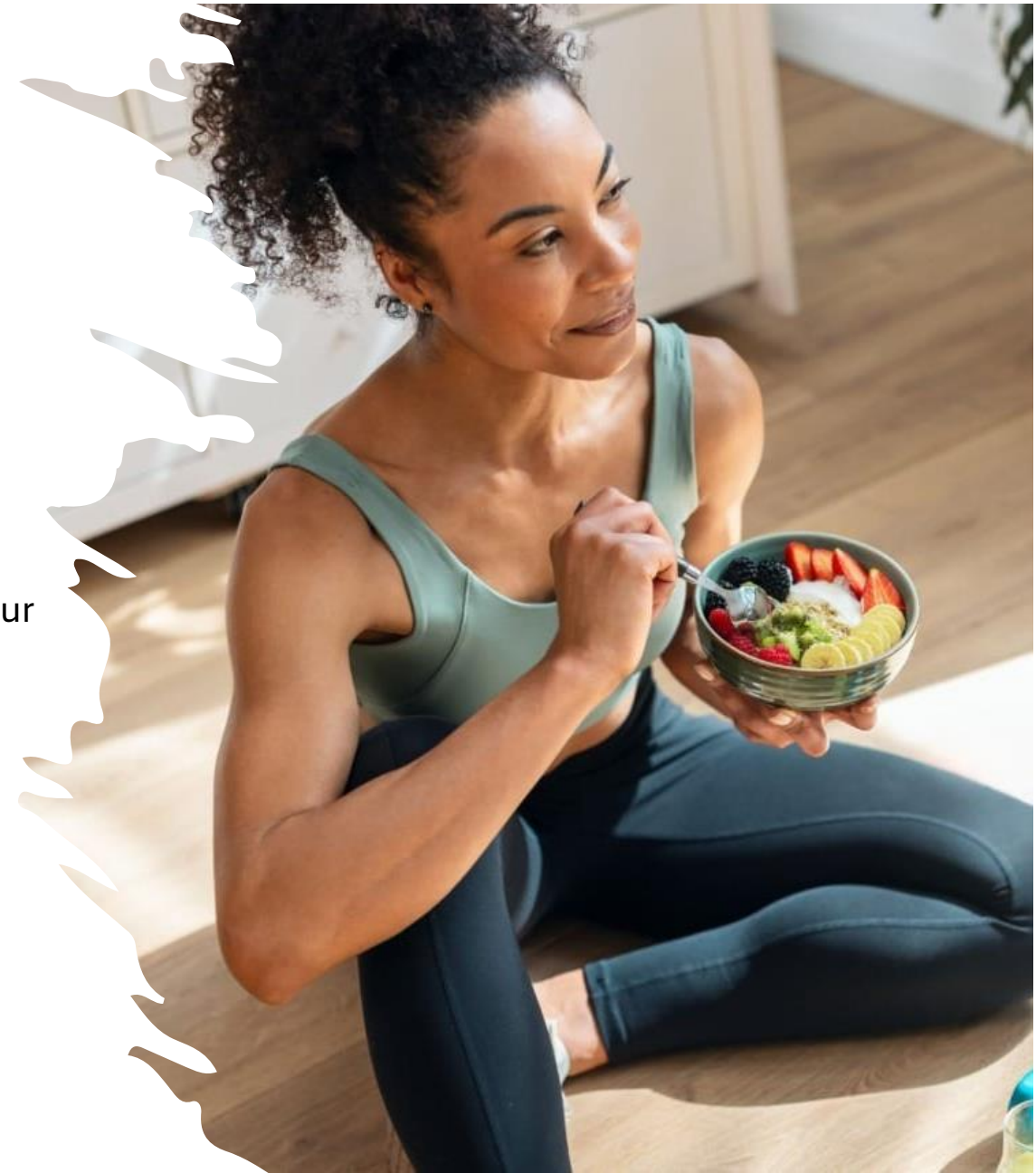


#4: Controls Satiety and Cravings

- Adequate protein at breakfast promotes lasting fullness, helping reduce the need for frequent snacking and supporting balanced blood sugar throughout the day.
- Supporting healthy blood sugar levels at breakfast (by a balanced meal that includes adequate protein) may help reduce cravings leading up to that next meal.
- Although individualized, frontloading calories (eating earlier in the day) can help provide adequate energy and prevent excessive hunger later in the evening, when activity levels and energy needs may be lower.

#5: Supports the Growth and Maintenance of Lean Muscle Mass Post Sleep

- Eating 20-40 grams of protein in the morning triggers muscle protein synthesis, repairing and maintaining active muscle mass after an overnight fast.
- While you're sleeping, you haven't eaten protein for several hours. Your body is still doing protein turnover—**breaking down and rebuilding proteins**—but you aren't supplying new dietary amino acids (from protein.)
- This is especially important for individuals that are in need of preserving lean muscle mass or growing lean muscle mass :
 - Athletes / Fitness Enthusiasts (especially early morning exercisers)
 - Older Adults : 60-65
 - Weight management / Weight loss Medications
 - Individuals who have a hard time meeting their protein needs



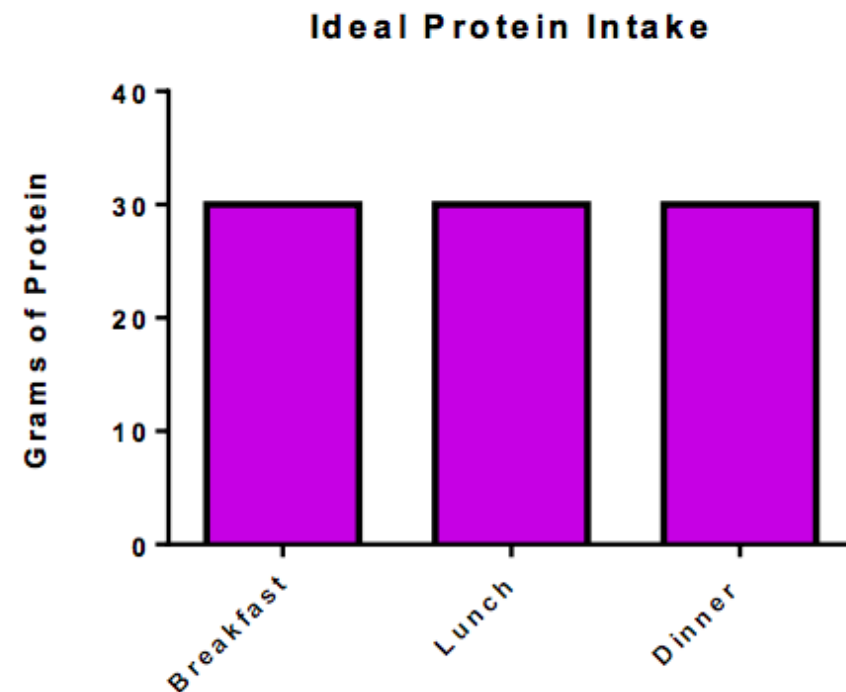
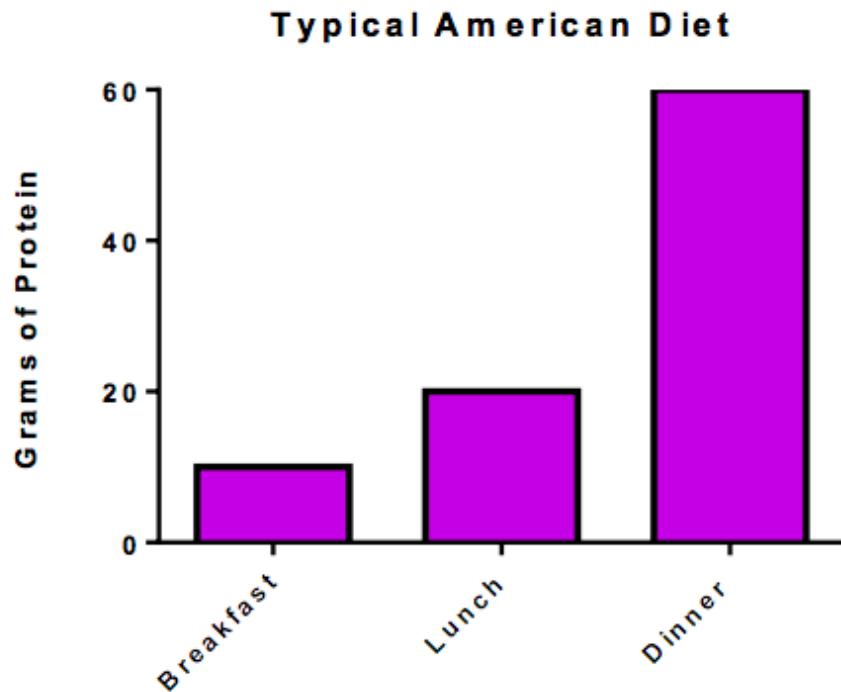
How Much Protein Do You Need At Breakfast?

- To start, what is our daily goal?
 - 0.8 g / kg of body weight is standard, but needs are highly individualized
 - Minimum of 55-65g per day for most individuals
- Aim for 20-40g per day or 1/3 of your daily needs or 0.25–0.4 g protein/kg body weight per meal.



Average Daily Protein Intake At Meals

Protein Distribution Between Meals



<https://nutrition.org/protein-its-whats-for-breakfast/>

Why Can Protein Be Challenging at Breakfast?

- Most skipped meal! (1 in 5 Americans skip breakfast)
- Preferences can naturally lean towards carbohydrate rich breakfast foods.
- Not a breakfast person usually due to not enjoying classic breakfast foods.
- Reduced morning appetite.
- Time restraints. No plan in place. Nothing prepped and ready to go.





Protein Rich Foods to Include At Breakfast

- Eggs
- Cottage Cheese
- Cheese
- Greek Yogurt
- Milk
- Protein Shake / Powder
- Collagen Powder (in coffee)
- Meat/Fish (can even be leftovers!)



Protein Rich Foods to Include At Breakfast

- Protein Pancakes / Waffles (Homemade or Kodiak)
- Protein Muffins (Recipe on next slide)
- Tofu
- Beans
- Nuts / Seeds
- Smoothies
- Protein Oats (Oats Overnight or Kodiak)

Pancake Recipe (1 pancake = 8g protein)

<https://www.loveandlemons.com/protein-pancakes/>

Protien Muffins!

Ingredients:

- 1 Box Kodiak Cakes Chocolate Muffin Mix
- 1 Cup Fat Free Fairlife Milk (or other milk of choice)
- 1 Scoop of Chocolate Protein Powder (I use Orgain)
- 3oz of Unsweet Applesauce (1 pouch = 3oz!)
- 3 Egg Whites

Instructions : Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 12 count muffin tin. Mix all ingredients together until smooth. Fill each cup about $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Bake for 15-20 min to desired consistency (less time = a little gooey). Knife should come out clean when done.

Nutrition Facts : 155 calories, 16g carbohydrates, 6g fat, and 9g protein.



Breakfast Meal Planning Tips to Ensure Eating Protein!

- From list just shown, pick 3-4 protein rich items to have on hand for the week.
- From there, prep them!
 - Boil eggs / Make Egg Muffins or a simple Egg bake.
 - Make pancakes / bake muffins on a Sunday to get ready for the week!
 - Brown meat to go in eggs for added protein.
 - Shred chicken or debone a Rotisserie Chicken that's already prepped.
 - Prep smoothie bags (Frozen berries, spinach, banana)
 - Purchase ready to go items such as Greek Yogurt, Cottage Cheese, Ready to Drink Protein Shakes.

Recipe for picture shown:

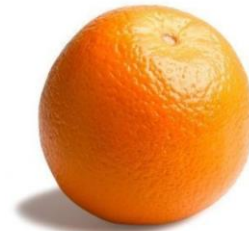
<https://cleanfoodcrush.com/breakfast-meal-prep/>



QUICK Protein Rich Breakfast Meal Ideas!



Quick Protein Rich Breakfast Ideas!



Let's Cook!

Recipe: [This Egg Bite Recipe Has Endless Possibilities](#)

Nutrition Facts:

1 serving = 2 egg bites

Calories 146

Fat 9g

Carbohydrates 3g

Protein 12 g



References

- <https://nutrition.org/protein-its-whats-for-breakfast/>
- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6619673/>
- <https://www.union.health/acaseforbreakfast>
- <https://therealfooddietitians.com/high-protein-breakfast-ideas/>

Recipes! <https://blog.myfitnesspal.com/30-grams-protein-breakfast/>