

## 4. Why is breakfast important for students?

### Why is breakfast the most important meal of the day?

Breakfast means 'break the fast', as the previous meal is typically 8–10 hours before waking up in the morning. Breakfast is important in re-fuelling the body with energy and nutrients, kick-starting the day. If breakfast is skipped, the result can be feeling lethargic and tired and lead to difficulty concentrating and behaviour difficulties in the school environment.

### Why is breakfast important for children?

Breakfast provides children with energy and essential nutrients, including iron, calcium and vitamins B and C, which are necessary for growth, development and good health. Children who eat breakfast each day are much more likely to meet their daily nutritional requirements, as a good quality breakfast can provide a child with up to a third of their daily nutrient needs. Children who don't eat breakfast may not make up for the nutrients not consumed within the rest of the day's intake. Eating breakfast can also reduce the risk of overweight and/or obesity, as breakfast is often replaced by mid-morning snacks that tend to be high in fat, sugar and salt. Skipping breakfast can also lead to over eating throughout the rest of the day, increasing the risk of becoming overweight or obese.

### How can breakfast affect children while at school?

Children who have eaten breakfast can concentrate better and have a longer attention span, helping them to learn and study better. They can also perform better physically after eating breakfast as there is more energy available to their muscles. Breakfast can improve behaviour and mood, as children have better concentration and aren't tired or hungry.

### Benefits of a breakfast program (for students who have not had breakfast at home)

- Providing essential nutrition for children and adolescents
- Better health and learning outcomes
- Socialisation
- Increase participation and engagement at school

### References

Dietitians Association of Australia, (2009), Breakfast, viewed 29 November 2010, <http://www.daa.asn.au/index.asp?pageID=2145834395>

SA Health (2009), SA Community Foodies Training Manual, internal document

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