

Fast Food Breakfast Choices

Warm-ups for the morning session start at 7:00 am, your two children need a breakfast, you're in a strange town, and the only place you can find for breakfast is one of the fast food places. What to do?

The most important thing to do is avoid fats for two reasons: 1) Fats have an immediate and dramatic effect on the ability of the circulatory system to carry nutrients, especially oxygen, to muscle cells. For young people about to participate in a swimming meet this is a definite handicap. And 2) As part of developing lifetime habits for long term health, people of all ages should keep their daily fat intake to less than 30 percent of the total calories consumed.

The Mayo Clinic Nutrition Letter offers these tips:*

You don't always have to nix nutrition for speed and convenience. Fast foods may not make ideal meals, but some do offer healthful carbohydrate and only moderate amounts of fat. You also can downplay fat excesses by sorting out subtle differences among items. Consider these points the next time you're grabbing breakfast on the run:

Keep it simple -- The fewer ingredients you order in breakfast sandwiches, the lower the fat, sodium and calories. Hold the sausage and bacon.

Order it "drier than a biscuit" -- The English muffin is the lowest-fat breakfast food on most quick-service menus. Order it dry and substitute jelly for the butter; this virtually eliminates fat. When other ingredients are equal, a sandwich made on an English muffin is lower in fat than one on a biscuit. Croissant sandwiches are highest in fat. "Croissant" may sound light and airy, but it contains twice the fat of a biscuit and six times the fat of an English muffin.

Choose "cakes" instead of eggs --Pancakes, even with a little butter, offer more energizing carbohydrate and less fat and cholesterol than egg dishes.

Below are three of the lowest-fat breakfast options found by the Mayo Clinic Nutrition Letter: These meals supply 20 to 30 percent of daily protein for the average adult, about 25 percent of daily calories for the average women, complex carbohydrates, vitamin C, and, in one example, calcium.

1. McDonald's Hotcakes with butter and syrup, orange juice, coffee: 493 calories, 16% of calories from fat.
2. McDonald's English muffin with butter, orange juice, low-fat milk: 384 calories, 23 % of calories from fat.
3. Jack in the Box Breakfast Jack (egg, ham and cheese on a hamburger bun), orange juice, coffee: 387 calories, 30 percent of calories from fat.

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