

Benefits of a Big Breakfast?

In a Spanish study, people who ate small breakfasts or skipped them entirely appeared to be at a higher risk for artery-clogging blood vessel plaque than those who had substantial morning meals. Plaque risk was 40 to 50 percent higher for those who ate lightly (mostly coffee and toast or pastries) and even higher in those who ate nothing. Big breakfasts included produce, healthy fats, cereal, and protein. This study can't prove cause and effect, but it mirrors earlier research that found skipping or skimping on breakfast could lead to unhealthy food choices and more calories later in the day, extra abdominal fat, and higher levels of inflammation and blood sugar.



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Hot Drinks That Keep You Healthy

Coffee, tea, and even hot cocoa can pack a nutritional punch.

When you're feeling tired, cold, or under the weather, there's nothing better than climbing into bed with a mug of something hot. In addition to being comforting, hot drinks replace fluids lost from fever and help loosen mucus. But they also have properties that may actually protect your health all year long. Which one should you sip? Consider these benefits and caveats.

COFFEE

Benefits: Java's caffeine can make you feel more alert, boost your mental and physical performance, and elevate your mood. Both regular and decaf are rich in polyphenols, those antioxidants that may help regulate blood sugar, prevent blood clots, and neutralize DNA-damaging free radicals.

Caveats: Eight ounces of coffee typically has about 100 milligrams of caffeine. Limit yourself to 400 milligrams a day. Depending on your sensitivity to caffeine, more may make you jittery, interfere with sleep, cause heart-rhythm or blood pressure problems.

TEA

Benefits: Tea's antioxidants and other compounds may protect against cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis, and memory decline. Researchers have found that people who drank multiple cups of hot tea a day had a body mass index 3 points lower on average, than non-tea drinkers. For the most antioxidants, steep for at least 3 minutes.

Caveats: Adding any type of milk to your tea may actually block the absorption of some of the antioxidants.

HERBAL INFUSIONS

Benefits: Herbal teas aren't really tea; they're caffeine-free infusions of flowers, roots, barks, and berries. Although the evidence is slim, some people use slippery elm tea for coughs and sore throats because it is viscous and coats the throat. Chamomile tea has been shown to have anti-inflammatory properties. Inflammation is a factor in many diseases, from eczema to certain cancers.

Caveats: Common herbal teas are fine for sore throats or stomach woes. But before trying to use them for more serious medical conditions, consult a doctor.

HOT COCOA

Benefits: Cocoa contains flavanols, antioxidants that may lower blood pressure, reduce stroke risk, and protect against diabetes by improving insulin sensitivity. Drinking two cups a day may also boost cognitive function in people with impaired blood flow to the brain.

Caveats: Indulging in a cup of hot cocoa too often could expand your waistline. Sugar is usually first on the ingredients list of individually packaged mixes.

A HOT TODDY

Benefits: This cold-weather drink of warm bourbon or rum, plus antioxidant-rich honey, lemon, and cloves, can't prevent a cold or the flu. But it might help soothe a sore or scratchy throat or make you feel more comfortable.

Caveats: Don't mix alcohol with cold and flu drugs. Remember that the healthy limit for alcohol consumption is one drink a day for women and two for men. And a hot toddy counts!

Staying Steady in Ice, Snow, and Sleet

Tripping and falling aren't inevitable, even in the slippery conditions that come with winter. Here's how to keep your balance.

The icy ground outside your door, on sidewalks, and in parking lots can make winter a treacherous time. And the older you get, the more difficult it can be to recover from a slip. Stronger muscles reduce the likelihood of falls by making you better able to keep your balance. So regular exercise, including strength training and stretching, can help. Here are more tips for staying on your feet:

WEAR THE RIGHT SHOES

deeply grooved, nonskid rubber treads can help to avoid slips and trips on the ice and snow. Wear lace-up shoes that fit snugly, and consider adding traction with slip-on ice cleats, available at sporting goods stores.

After you've been out, take off wet shoes so that you don't track slippery water around the house. Don't go barefoot though; change into a pair of dry shoes to keep you steadier on your feet indoors.

STEP CAREFULLY

Try to avoid walking on icy patches, and remember that hazards -- including ice and uneven ground -- can hide under snow and slush. If you must walk over snow or ice, take short, flat steps, like a penguin. Be especially careful if you have dulled foot sensation due to diabetes, which can impair your balance. Climbing stairs? Face the railing, hold on with both hands, and step sideways.

BE PREPARED

You may think a cane or walker would make it harder to navigate patches of snow or slush, even if you normally use one. But those are the times when that extra support can help the most. Consider adding an ice-gripping tip if you use a cane, which will provide additional stability.

Salt the pathway from your door if you know bad weather is coming. And you should also consider carrying a zip-top bag filled with some kitty litter, which you can sprinkle on slick surfaces you encounter.

LOOK SHARP

People with vision problems are especially prone to falls, so make sure your eyeglass prescription is up to date. In the winter, it also means that as you bundle up under scarves and hats, it's important that your sight isn't obstructed, especially because snow can create glare. Also make sure you can see where you're walking.



Did you Know?

Walking just might lower breast cancer risk.

In a 17-year study of 73,615 postmenopausal women conducted by the American Cancer Society, those who reported walking for at least 7 hours a week were 14 percent less likely to develop breast cancer compared with women who walked for 3 hours a week or less. And the most active women -- those who engaged in not just walking but more vigorous forms of physical activity -- had a risk that was 25 percent lower. Earlier studies have also linked physical activity to a reduced risk of breast cancer in women after menopause.

You might gain weight if your team loses.

A study of 726 football fans during two NFL seasons found that the day after a game, fans in the losing team's city ate 16 percent more saturated fat and 10 percent more calories than usual. Fans in cities with winning teams actually consumed less saturated fat and fewer calories. Previous studies have linked football losses with more traffic fatalities, heart attacks, domestic violence, and alcohol-related crime.