

The unbeatable breakfast

THE BEST NEW WEIGHT LOSS SECRET IS PROBABLY ALREADY IN YOUR PANTRY.

IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT CEREAL CAN be a quick vitamin-rich breakfast. But now scientists are giving us even more incentive to pop open a box: Data provided by ongoing government surveys that examine the health and diets of Americans show that people who eat cereal regularly weigh less and have healthier diets overall than those who don't.

These surveys—The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, and the Continuing Survey of Food Intakes of Individuals, conducted by the USDA—may tell you to eat cereal, but they don't say *which* ones to eat. So what are the best cereals to start your day?

"For weight control, high-fiber varieties are the way to go," says Cynthia Sass, R.D., a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association. "Fiber makes you feel full longer, so you're less likely to overeat later. Sugary cereals

will provide a fast blast of energy, but you'll crash just as quickly, which will leave you tired and hungry again." If you absolutely can't go cold turkey on the Froot Loops, Sass suggests mixing them half-and-half with a high-fiber cereal. The fiber will help slow the absorption of the sugar. Gradually increase the proportion of the good stuff until you're downing a whole bowl of it. "I think whole-grain, high-fiber cereals—even those with higher-than-ideal amounts of sugar—are healthiest," says Sass.

High fiber, low sugar, what does it mean? It turns out that six is the magic number. Aim for cereals with 6 or more grams of fiber and 6 or fewer grams of sugar *per serving*. And keep in mind: Serving sizes vary, often for good reason. A half cup of Cheerios won't fill you up; a whole cup of All Bran might make you feel bloated. Still, if you're counting calories, this is news you can use. —Margit Feury

DROP 6 POUNDS IN 2 WEEKS?

Perhaps you've seen the ad for the "Special K Kick-Start Diet" on the back of its box. Eating a cup of Special K, $\frac{2}{3}$ cup skim milk and fruit for breakfast and again for lunch or dinner (and snacking on fruits and veggies) can help you lose up to 6 pounds in two weeks, suggests Kellogg's-sponsored research at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. The weight loss factor is simple, says Richard D. Mattes, Ph.D., who followed Kick-Start study participants: "You eat fewer calories" (270 versus the 450 you'd get from a deli tuna sandwich). But should you do it? In a nutshell: "It's fine for two weeks if you eat a balanced third meal and squeeze in vegetables as snacks," says Cynthia Sass, R.D. "But I wouldn't try the diet long term. It may not provide enough protein."

SLIM DOWN AS YOU FILL UP—WITH THE RIGHT CEREAL

We don't need to tell you that sugary cereals are snacks, not nutritious breakfasts. But even some "healthy" varieties don't fit the high-fiber, low-sugar profile. Here's how your cereal stacks up:

EXCELLENT CHOICES!	PRETTY GOOD...	MAKE THE CEREAL SWITCH
Fibre One ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) 60 calories, 1 g fat, 14 g fiber, 0 g sugars The hands-down winner. Learn to love it—or at least mix it with your yogurt.	Post Raisin Bran (1 cup) 190 calories, 1 g fat, 8 g fiber, 20 g sugars It's high in fiber—and sugars, though some of it comes from those nutritious little raisins.	Multigrain Cheerios (1 cup) 110 calories, 1 g fat, 3 g fiber, 6 g sugars Mult grain Cheerios has more vitamins (and sugar) than the regular variety, but alas, no more fiber.
All Bran ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) 80 calories, 1 g fat, 10 g fiber, 6 g sugars Another top selection in terms of fiber and sugar content. Dress it up with berries.	Kashi Heart to Heart ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) 110 calories, 1.5 g fat, 5 g fiber, 5 g sugars Full of antioxidants and folic acid; a good, but not great, source of fiber	Whole Grain Total ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) 110 calories, 1 g fat, 3 g fiber, 5 g sugars Looking for calcium, iron or folic acid? One bowl, and you're done for the day. But fiber? Next!
GO Lean ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) 120 calories, 1 g fat, 10 g fiber, 7 g sugars A tad high in sugars, this fiber leader also packs in 8 grams of protein. Wow!	Fruit & Fibre (1 cup) 190 calories, 3 g fat, 6 g fiber, 16 g sugars Another solid high-fiber choice. The dried fruit ups the sugar—and the flavor.	Wheaties (1 cup) 110 calories, 1 g fat, 3 g fiber, 4 g sugars This cereal provides lots of vitamins. Sugar is low, but so is the fiber. You can do better.
Shredded Wheat (1 cup) 170 calories, 1 g fat, 6 g fiber, 0 g sugars Great selection, but note: The honey-nut variety skimps on fiber (4 g) and has more sugars (12 g).	Grape Nuts ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) 210 calories, 1 g fat, 5 g fiber, 5 g sugars Higher in calories than most, but—bummer!—not as high-fiber as you'd think	Kellogg's Low-Fat Granola ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup) 220 calories, 3 g fat, 17 g sugars Use it as a topping on your frozen yogurt—it's just a snack!