

Shopping for cereal

The grocery aisle is filled with many cereal options. Here are some tips for selecting the most nutritious cereals that will give your family long lasting energy to conquer the day.

1. **Look up, look down.** Many sugary cereals are located at eye level to attract consumers. Usually, the more nutritious cereals are located at the top or bottom of the grocery shelves.
2. **Be a detective.** Many cereal companies advertise that they are a complete breakfast because they are fortified with vitamins and minerals. However, by law, ALL cereals need to be fortified, so don't be fooled by advertising. To get the whole story, turn the box over and look for the following:

Fiber- when selecting a cereal, aim for at least 3 grams of fiber per serving. Fiber helps you feel full and regulates blood sugar levels.

Sugar- starting the day with a lot of added sugar can lead to the mid-morning crash. When selecting a cereal aim for 9 grams of sugar or less.

Serving size- cereal serving sizes can vary from $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $1\frac{1}{4}$ cup. Keep this mind when selecting a cereal. For example, a cereal may contain 8 grams of sugar per $\frac{3}{4}$ cup serving. If you fill your bowl, it is likely that you are consuming two cups of cereal or over 21 grams of sugar.

3. **Make it a game!** Children have strong opinions when it comes to breakfast cereal. Instead of being the food cop, challenge your kids to get involved. Let them be the detectives. Set the nutrition guidelines that work for your family, and let your children investigate next time you're at the grocery store.
4. **Spruce it up.** Switching to a new cereal can be an adjustment. To add flavor, try adding the following: dried fruit, nuts, bananas, berries, seeds, cinnamon, and/or honey. Get your kids involved by encouraging them to design their own cereal. For example: Matt's Morning Mix (toasted oats, $\frac{1}{2}$ banana, raisins, almonds, and cinnamon).

Remember, breakfast is one of the most important meals of the day. Help your family get off to a great start and select foods that promote health and wellness.

One fun way to promote the importance of eating a balanced breakfast is to create edible art. Here is what you need: yarn or string, scissors, toasted oats or Cheerios. To get started, cut the string into a 14 inch piece for a necklace or 6 inch piece for a bracelet. Tie a knot at one end and let your child thread the cereal on the string. Once done, tie the finished product around your child's neck or wrist. Of course, encourage snacking along the way and discuss with your children why breakfast is so important.

