

# BREAKFAST CONSUMPTION

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Breakfast consumption declines with age among Texas children.

Breakfast is an important component of a healthy diet. Eating a healthy breakfast contributes to improved overall nutrition and improved cognitive function in school children.<sup>2,3</sup>

## Breakfast Habits of Texas Children

### On a given school day:



Among 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 57.9% of girls eat breakfast compared to 70.9% of boys.<sup>1</sup>



13.9% of non-border 8<sup>th</sup> graders eat breakfast at school compared to 34.4% of border 8<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>1</sup>



Eating breakfast at **home** decreases with age:<sup>1</sup>

57.8% of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders  
39.0% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders  
36.9% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders  
32.5% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders.



Eating breakfast at **school** decreases with age:<sup>1,9</sup>

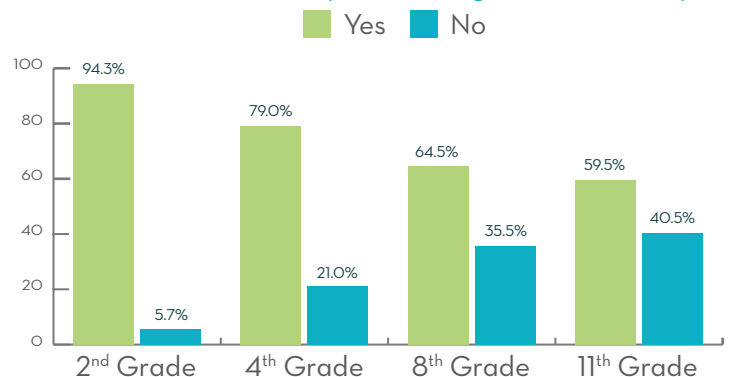
29.4% of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders  
27.9% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders  
17.9% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders  
17.3% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders.

## Why Breakfast Consumption Matters

Not eating breakfast can affect children's overall nutritional status and academic achievement. Eating breakfast is associated with:<sup>2,3,4</sup>

- improved academic achievement
- reduced absenteeism
- healthier body weight
- improved overall nutrition
- improved mood

Breakfast consumption on a given school day:<sup>1</sup>



## How we can increase breakfast consumption at school and at home:

- Offer breakfast for all students, regardless of free or reduced lunch status<sup>6</sup>
- Promote healthy breakfasts at school every day, not just during testing periods<sup>6</sup>
- Implement a “breakfast after the bell” program<sup>6</sup>
- Increase participation in the School Breakfast Program<sup>6,8</sup>
- Look for quick and easy breakfast ideas to make at home<sup>7</sup>

## Current Nutrition Guidelines<sup>5</sup>

The US Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Agriculture advise following a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan. Their 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends focusing on variety, nutrient density, and quantity, limiting calories from added sugars and saturated fats, reducing sodium intake, and shifting to healthier food and beverage choices.

A healthy eating pattern includes a variety of vegetables, fruits, grains (at least half of which are whole grains) fat-free or low-fat dairy, a variety of protein-rich foods, and oils. A healthy eating pattern limits saturated fats and trans fats, added sugars, and sodium.

## References

1. School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Project. Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living. SPAN project details available online at [go.uth.edu/SPAN](http://go.uth.edu/SPAN).

The School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Project is a surveillance system monitoring the prevalence of overweight/obesity in school-aged children in Texas conducted by researchers at the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living. SPAN has been funded by the Texas Department of State Health Services since 2000 to conduct height and weight measurements across different grade levels.

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3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Childhood Nutrition Facts. February 15, 2021.
4. Au, L E, et al. Eating School Meals Daily is Associated with Healthier Dietary Intakes: The Healthy Communities Study. 2018 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29555435/>
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6. Increasing Breakfast Participation to Improve Student Outcomes. Food Research & Action Center. March 2018. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/increasing-breakfast-participation-to-improve-student-outcomes.pdf>
7. Breakfast: Key to Growing Healthy. Eat Right. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. July 2021. <https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/eating-as-a-family/breakfast-key-to-growing-healthy>
8. 7 Key Findings on the Benefits of Healthy School Meals for All. Healthy Eating Research. [https://healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/HER\\_UniversalSchoolMeals\\_Infographic\\_07022021-1-1.pdf](https://healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/HER_UniversalSchoolMeals_Infographic_07022021-1-1.pdf)
9. School Breakfast Program. USDA Food and Nutrition Service. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/school-breakfast-program>

## About the Texas Child Health Status Report

These reports utilize state-level data from the School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Project to provide an accurate representation of Texas child health. This project is funded by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation.

Learn more at [go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth](http://go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth)

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