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# News

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with  
Weekly  
Reader.

## Is This Breakfast or Dessert?

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breakfast foods  
have as much sugar  
as many desserts.**

**Page 4**



**video**  
Sugar Secrets  
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A Sports Car in Space p. 6 • Should College Athletes Get Paid? p. 7

# The Truth About Breakfast



Many popular breakfast foods are loaded with just as much sugar as a lot of desserts.

**D**awson Leach, a fifth-grader from Meridian, Idaho, knows the importance of eating a healthy breakfast.

"It's the first meal of the day, and it gets your brain going for school," he says.

Dawson often has a big bowl of Honey Nut Cheerios with milk, and a chocolate chip granola bar. He thought this breakfast was perfectly healthy. That's why Dawson was shocked to learn that it contains more than 40 grams of sugar. That's about the same amount of sugar as in a king-size Hershey's chocolate bar.

Like Dawson, many people would be surprised by how much sugar they're consuming for breakfast. Some breakfast foods that are often thought of as being healthy, such as granola bars and certain cereals, have just as much sugar as some desserts do.

"A lot of people think because it says 'whole grain,' it's offering a lot of nutrients," says Marlo Mittler, a nutrition expert with more than 20 years of experience. "But a lot of these foods are just the same as cookies."

## What's for Breakfast?

Health experts say it's important to start the day with foods that are high in nutrients. For example, eggs are a good source of protein, which helps your muscles grow. Milk also provides protein, as well as calcium, which helps strengthen your bones.

### Words to Know

**moderation** noun. the act of using a reasonable limit or amount

**sustain** verb. to keep up or continue

"When you have a breakfast that offers a lot of nutrition, you're going to be able to learn more, focus more, and stay awake and alert," says Mittler.

Many common breakfast foods, such as yogurt and some cereals, do contain important nutrients. But experts say the problem is that many of these foods are often packed with sugar.

### Natural vs. Added

Not all sugar is the same. Sugar occurs naturally in foods such as fruits, grains, and milk and other dairy products. Most foods with natural sugar are sources of vitamins and other nutrients, such as fiber, which helps with digestion. Despite those benefits, health experts say natural

sugar should be consumed in **moderation**. For example, experts recommend that kids eat only two to four servings of fruit a day.

What health experts are more concerned about, however, is added sugar. That's sugar that is put into foods and drinks—including many yogurts, cereals, and baked goods—as they're processed and prepared. Eating foods with a lot of added sugar gives you a quick burst of energy. But these foods typically lack nutrients, so they won't keep you full or give you the long-lasting energy you need to get through the morning.

"They're really not doing anything to help kids **sustain** concentration or help them use their brains," says Mittler.

Also, consuming too much added sugar has been linked to tooth decay, obesity, and other health issues.

According to the American Heart Association, kids should have no more than 25 grams of added sugar a day. However, on average, kids ages 6 to 11 consume about three times that much.

### A Healthy Start

So how can you make sure you're eating a healthy breakfast?

Reading nutrition labels on food packaging and drink containers is a good way to start. Any sugar that appears in the ingredients list is added sugar. Spotting it can be tricky, though, because added sugar goes by several names.

Ingredients that end in *-ose*, such as high-fructose corn syrup, are sugars. Other names for sugar you might see on food labels include corn sweetener, cane crystals, nectar, and honey.


It's also important to note the serving sizes on nutrition labels. They're often different from the amount you might ordinarily eat. For example, one serving of Honey Nut Cheerios is only three-quarters of a cup. But Dawson eats two cups of the cereal for breakfast.

Dawson says he has learned a valuable lesson. From now on, he's going to pay closer attention to the nutrition labels for the foods he eats for breakfast.

"That will tell you what's really in it," he says.

—by Joe Bubar

**Do the Math**  
On nutrition labels, the amount of sugar is shown in grams (g). Exactly how much is that?  
**4 grams = 1 teaspoon**



## Breakfast vs. Dessert

Here's a look at some common breakfast foods and desserts that have a similar amount of sugar.

#### BREAKFAST ITEM

#### DESSERT TREAT\*\*



2 Eggo Cinnamon French Toaster Sticks with syrup\*\*\*  
**31 grams of sugar**



Vanilla cupcake with vanilla frosting



Yoplait Original Strawberry Yogurt (6-ounce container)  
**18 grams of sugar**



Vanilla ice cream cone with rainbow sprinkles



Kellogg's Raisin Bran (1 cup, without milk)  
**18 grams of sugar**



1 brownie



Quaker Oats Chewy Yogurt Granola Bar (0.84 ounces)  
**11 grams of sugar**



1 chocolate chip cookie



Dunkin' Donuts blueberry muffin  
**43 grams of sugar**



1 bag of Skittles (2.17 ounces)

Learn about some healthier breakfast options at [www.scholastic.com/SN56](http://www.scholastic.com/SN56)

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\*Figures are based on nutritional information listed on the companies' official websites and product packaging. \*\*Based on the typical serving sizes of several common brands. \*\*\*Syrup serving size is 2 tablespoons.