

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

October 8, 2017

## “Breakfast is a Very Important Meal”

It appears that Mom may have been right in telling you that breakfast may be the most important meal of the day. It gives you the energy to start a new day and it is linked to many health benefits, including weight control, improved performance, and lower risk of cardiovascular disease. Dietary patterns have changed significantly over the last few decades such that an estimated 20% to 30% of adults skip breakfast. These trends mirror the increase in obesity and associated cardiometabolic derangements. Studies show that eating a *healthy* breakfast (as opposed to the kind containing doughnuts) can help give you more strength and endurance to engage in physical activity; improved concentration and performance in the class room or the boardroom; intake of vitamins, minerals and fiber and lower cholesterol levels. Breakfast is especially important for adolescents and children. Many studies, in both adults and children, have shown that breakfast eaters tend to weigh less than breakfast skippers. It is believed that eating a healthy breakfast can reduce hunger throughout the day, and help people make better food choices at other meals. While it might appear that you could save calories by skipping breakfast, this is not an effective strategy. Typically, hunger gets the best of breakfast-skippers, and they eat more at lunch and throughout the day. Most studies linking breakfast to weight control loss looked at a healthy breakfast containing protein and/or whole grains -- not meals loaded with fat and calories. A new study in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology reported that breakfast-eaters have less arteriosclerosis (plaque and heart disease). Skipping breakfast was associated with atherosclerotic buildup in this Spanish study, with light breakfasts also tied to subclinical plaque formation. Skipping breakfast was associated with male gender, smoking, drinking more alcoholic beverages, and eating more red meat. As opposed to eating large breakfasts, habitually skipping them was associated with more generalized atherosclerosis, independent of traditional and dietary cardiovascular risk factors. Compared with a full breakfast, light ones comprising 5% to 20% of daily calories were still associated with more carotid artery and iliofemoral artery plaques, which means sites other than the heart also have more plaque. Researchers said that skipping breakfast might serve as a marker for a general unhealthy diet or lifestyle, which in turn is associated with the development and progression of atherosclerosis. However, it is less clear whether skipping breakfast causes more people to be obese or if the obese skip breakfast with the misguided goal of losing weight.

In the America that I love, it seems prudent to pay attention to diet and educate the public to implement simple lifestyle changes that include emphasis on a regular, hearty, and nutritious breakfast.

Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

Surgeon/Scientist/Patient Advocate

27439 Highway 441, Kentwood, LA 70444

985-229-6955 Home | 985-229-3760 – Fax | 985-514-0578 – Cell

[rhowesmd@hughes.net](mailto:rhowesmd@hughes.net) | [www.iwillfindthecure.org](http://www.iwillfindthecure.org)

