The potential role of (whole grain) breakfast cereals for nutrient intake

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Children benefit in many ways from eating breakfast. Scientific evidence suggests that regular breakfast consumption is associated with improved nutritional status at any age of the child. The relationship between breakfast consumption and health benefits may not be due to breakfast *per se* but due to the consumption of specific breakfast foods. This work reviews the role of breakfast cereals for nutrient intake. The potential merit of breakfast cereals for a healthy diet has been subject to various surveys. Evidence suggests that children who consume breakfast cereals, as opposed to non-cereal breakfasts, are more likely to meet their daily recommended nutrient intakes. In particular, intakes of fibre, calcium, iron, folic acid, zinc were found to be significantly higher. This is true for both children from low socio-economic class and high socio-economic class. In particular, whole grain cereal consumption seems to contribute substantially to a better nutrient intake as has recently been demonstrated in secondary analysis of a representative survey of Irish children. Whole grains contain high amounts of many bioactive components, such as fibre, phytonutrients, vitamins, and minerals. It is reasonable to assume that these components may work synergistically to help maintain or improve health. For instance, whole grain has a higher phytonutrient content and antioxidant activity than refined grain. Refined wheat flour loses more than 80% of total phenolics and approx. 80% of total flavonoids compared to whole wheat flour. In conclusion, regular consumption of breakfast cereals is associated with better nutritional status. Breakfast cereals, especially when made with whole grain, can help to improve the intake of vitamins, minerals and fibre as well as plant bioactives inherent in whole grain. Whole grain breakfast can be an integral part of a balanced dietary pattern not only, but in particular, for children.

Keywords
breakfast cereals, whole grain, nutrient intake.

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