

Increasing Trend of Skipping Breakfast among College Students

Muhammad Tayyab Pirzada¹, Syed Ahsan Zia²

Dear Madam,

Through the courtesy of your highly esteemed journal, I would like to shed some light on an apparent enigma which is undermining both our physical and mental well-being in a rather insidious manner. The increasing trend of skipping breakfast has now propelled to an alarming rate in recent years, especially among college students. It is therefore quite imperative that this matter should now be addressed with seriousness.

A preliminary pilot survey was conducted among the students of Karachi Medical and Dental College with a sample size of 144. A total of 28% students reported that they do not eat breakfast before coming to college and the rest stated themselves as habitual breakfast eaters, 5 to 6 times per week. However, the students who participated were not serious and answered the question rather vaguely. Therefore, the credibility of the data is doubted and we plan on doing a more extensive research next time.

A survey that was conducted at the Midwestern University in the United States of America, in which a total of 1,257 college students participated with a responsive rate of 85%, the purpose of which was to examine the prevalence of breakfast and associated health-compromising behaviours. Over one-fifth i.e. 21% of the students reported that they never ate breakfast and 28% said that they

have it once or twice a week¹. Breakfast being the most important meal of the day holds a pivotal role in both our physical and mental health. It replenishes our carbohydrate reserves and kick-starts our metabolism, which in turns helps us burn more calories and enables us to stay in shape. Moreover, it also has a profound effect on our cognitive functioning which enables us to stay alert and agile during our early morning lectures. Breakfast consumption has positive outcomes on diet quality, micronutrient intake, and weight status and lifestyle factors. One such research examining the effect of breakfast on in-class behaviour and academic performance in children and adolescents, that were either undernourished or well-nourished and belonging to different socio-economic class, was conducted. It stated that increased frequency of habitual breakfast consumption was consistently positively associated with academic performance, especially in arithmetic, compared with undernourished children².

A majority of the students who skip breakfast either complain that they do not have enough time or that they are not hungry, whereas some believe that by skipping breakfast they are curtailing down their calories and, thus, this will help them to lose weight. The latter is a myth and it might seem an apparent paradox to say that it, in fact, increases your weight. According to one research, obesity prevalence is significantly higher in breakfast skippers than in breakfast eaters³. Skipping breakfast also has a direct correlation with depressive mood, according to one such survey conducted in 2013 by the Korean Community Health. Participants who had breakfast seldom had higher depressive symptoms than those who were regular breakfast eat-

¹⁻² Second Year Medical Students,
Karachi Medical and Dental College

Correspondence: Muhammad Tayyab Pirzada
Karachi Medical and Dental College
Email: cr9_destiny@hotmail.com
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ers⁴. Skipping breakfast also hampers the total energy intake and physical activity in healthy women who are habitual breakfast eaters. Energy intake was notably low on days that they skipped breakfast and physical activity energy expenditure was also slightly lower in comparison to the days that they ate breakfast⁵.

In light of the afore mentioned facts and figures, one should definitely reconsider before skipping breakfast, as this can have some acute effect on our physical health and cognitive functioning. Students who complain of lack of time should really reconstruct their schedules in terms of sleeping hours and at what time they should sleep so that they can wake up early with an ideal 6 to 8 hours of sleep and can have time for breakfast. Those who complain about not feeling hungry should change their dietary habits, like eating a light dinner so that they can have those early morning cravings once they get off their bed. Awareness programs and seminars should be held in the different educational institutions which should aim at cultivating a sense of importance of breakfast and educating people with its acute aftermath in case if one is not a habitual eater.

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Answer of Picture Quiz:

Q. 1: D, Q. 2: C, Q. 3: C.

Midgutmalrotation:

Bilious vomiting remains a cardinal sign of neonatal intestinal obstruction and malrotation must be presumed the diagnosis until proven otherwise. Malrotation is a congenital anomaly of rotation of the midgut (embryologically, the gut undergoes a complex rotation outside the abdomen). As a result, the small bowel is found predominantly on the right side of the abdomen. The caecum is displaced (from its usual position in the right lower quadrant) into the epigastrium to right hypochondrium. The ligament of Treitz is displaced inferiorly and rightward. The fibrous bands (Ladd's band) course over the vertical position of the duodenum, causing intestinal obstruction. The small intestine usually has a narrow base, and therefore the midgut is prone to volvulus (a twisting that can obstruct the mesenteric blood vessels and cause intestinal ischaemia).