

Dear Health Seeker,

How do you like to start your day? Do you know that those first few choices each morning will set your brain up for what you continue to choose for the rest of the day?



How we wake up in the morning sets the rhythm for how we'll move through the day. Eating within a couple of hours of waking up lets our body know we have access to food and can release the fasting mode we go into overnight. Skipping breakfast completely sends a stress signal to the body that there isn't enough food, setting a whole chemical cascade in motion which releases cortisol (our primary stress hormone which also opposes insulin). Paired with drinking caffeine, which also stimulates cortisol release, we are setting ourselves up for a blood sugar rollercoaster and the accompanying drops in energy and concentration – not to mention mood swings – all day.

There's a lot of buzz about intermittent fasting right now. While there's many benefits to longer stretches without eating, many of us are simply going too long without eating because we don't fully understand the negative impacts that come with taking a sound principle too far. Research suggests optimal fasting times for women are 12-14 hours and 14-16 hours for men. When people go beyond these numbers, we lose most of the good effects we were striving for. That means most of us can stop eating around 7p and resume eating by 9a and have the positive digestive, metabolic, and hormonal impacts without triggering the physiological stress response.

What we eat is as important as when we eat it. Avoiding carbohydrates in the morning and focusing on protein and vegetables is most ideal for our biorhythm and nervous system. In American culture, breakfast foods are often carb-heavy making this more of a mindset shift than anything else. Thinking outside the breakfast box can be really helpful in creating new morning habits. Sautéed greens with sausage and mushrooms or hearty soups are quick and easy choices that fill our body with nutrient-dense food. Chia puddings can be made ahead of time and are a protein and fiber-rich grab-n-go item. A fried egg on top of lettuce with olive oil, lemon and avocado can brighten any morning.



(Yes, this is my actual breakfast!!)

If you're not ready to jump into a whole new menu, try enhancing what you do like. Round out oatmeal by adding nut butter, coconut manna, flax, chia and sesame seeds. Dress up toast by slathering it with avocado, sea salt and nutritional yeast. Throw some vegetables into scrambled eggs.

Adjusting how you drink coffee can also be highly beneficial. Starting the day with warm water and lemon allows the body to hydrate first. (Caffeine is a diuretic and therefore dehydrating.) Waiting to drink coffee until you're ready to eat can also help to balance blood sugar and mitigate some of the stimulatory effects. Using half decaf beans in your brew can also go a long way! If this sounds like sacrilege to you dedicated "coffee first" folks, how about adding some collagen powder and butter or MCT oil to add fat and protein to your beverage? This makes coffee more nutrient dense, supports your overall vitality, and tastes delicious!

Lately I've been enjoying playing with non-coffee based milky drinks to satisfy that need to have something hearty in the morning. I'm enjoying almond or oat milk with raw cacao powder, mushroom powder, collagen and MCT oil. Last week I added a turmeric-based Golden Milk blend and that added an interesting spicy kick that I love.



No matter where you're at in this moment, start by picking one thing that feels easy to incorporate and let that become a habit before you commit to the next practice. Keeping wellness goals realistic and doable is the key to success!

If you want support along your journey (with food or in life!), I'd be happy to walk the path with you. [Email me here](#) and let's set something up.

To our collective health!
Dr. Nicola