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Nebraska Extension – Buffalo County
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Choosing Breakfast Cereal

Breakfast cereal is a quick, easy and nutritious way to start the day. But, which one to buy?

Here are some things to look for when choosing cereal.

Breakfast cereal should be nutrient dense and contain plenty of fiber but very little sugar and fat. Generally a one-ounce serving of hot or cold breakfast cereal should contain:

- 100-200 calories (ideally less than 120 calories).
- protein (2 or more grams).
- fiber (3 grams or more, preferably 5 grams or more).
- sugar (8 grams or less).
- fat (less than 3 grams of fat and no trans fat).
- between 10 and 25% of the Daily Value (DV) for key vitamins and minerals (e.g. iron, folate, B₆ and B₁₂).

It is easy to eat more than a one-ounce serving of cereal. In ready-to-eat breakfast cereal, a one-ounce serving is 1 cup flakes or rounds or 1¼ cup puffed cereal. A one-ounce serving of a cooked cereal is ½ cup. For example, a serving of oatmeal equals: ½ cup cooked; 1 packet instant or 1 ounce dry (regular or quick).

Read the Nutrition Facts label and select a breakfast cereal containing more nutrients per serving among brands. This includes nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, carbohydrate and protein. Most of today's breakfast cereals are fortified with vitamins and minerals, ranging from 10% to 100% DV. Do not depend on ready-to-eat cereal to provide 100% DV for vitamins and minerals. Remember, it is important to get nutrients from vegetables, fruits and whole grains, which also provide fiber, phytochemicals and other antioxidants.

Look for nutritious cereals, both hot and cold, that are made of whole grain and are high in fiber. Whole grains are good sources of dietary fiber, but most refined (processed) grains

contain little fiber. Look for a cereal with at least 3 grams of fiber per serving, preferably at least 5 grams. When looking at the fiber content on the Nutrition Facts label, 5% DV or less means the product is low in fiber, and 20% DV or higher means the product is high in fiber.

Check the ingredients list for “whole grain” words such as: whole wheat; whole grain oats; bran; whole barley or hulled barley, and whole corn.

Avoid low-density sugary cereals and select ones with little or no added sugar. Choose a cereal that has 8 grams or less of sugar per serving. Look for added sugars in the ingredients list, such as: brown sugar; honey; molasses; high fructose corn syrup; corn sweetener; maltose; dextrose; sucrose, and fruit juice concentrates.

Using these tips should make it easier to select nutritious breakfast cereals. For more information about breakfast cereal contact Nebraska Extension in Buffalo County, 1400 East 34th Street, Kearney or call (308) 236-1235.