Eating Pattern Affects Type 2 Diabetes Risk in Men

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Type 2 diabetes rates continue to go up among adults and youth, increasing risk for serious and expensive health complications, such as heart disease, kidney failure, and blindness. One important risk factor for type 2 diabetes is being obese, so lifestyle choices that increase obesity risk, such as skipping breakfast, may also increase diabetes risk.

Recently, researchers reported the results of a long-term study of 29,000 men that examined how their food intake affected their risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Eating habits were assessed every four years between 1992 and 2006. Family history, physical activity, smoking status, and other lifestyle factors were also reported. What the men chose to eat did affect their risk of developing diabetes. For instance, men who reported that they usually skipped breakfast had a 21% higher risk of type 2 diabetes than men who generally ate breakfast, and men who usually ate only one or two times a day had a 25% higher risk than men who ate three times a day (Mekary, Giovannucci, Willett, van Dam, & Hu, 2012).

We often hear that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and this study points to yet another reason to consume this morning meal, at least for men. Since the nutritional quality of the meal didn't seem to affect diabetes risk, it seems that eating breakfast has metabolic effects that are unrelated to the meal's quality. Still, a nutritious breakfast,

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including a whole-grain food, a fruit or vegetable, and a low-fat calcium source, such as fat-free or 1% milk, is a great choice for the entire family (Mekary, Giovannucci, Willett, van Dam, & Hu, 2012).

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