

Fuel for Success: The Importance of Eating Breakfast

By Sheldon Riklon, M.D.

In February, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed the Free School Breakfast Bill into law to provide all children at public schools with a free breakfast, regardless of their income, starting in the 2025-2026 school year. This bill will ensure students start their school day with a nutritious meal, helping them reach their full academic potential.

Breakfast is often called “the most important meal of the day” because it replenishes energy and provides essential nutrients to kickstart your day.

When children experience hunger, it can negatively impact long-term health, behavior and grades.

Five Key Benefits of Eating Breakfast:

1. Boosts Energy Levels
 - Breakfast provides the brain with energy, helping students feel alert and focused.
2. Improves Memory, Concentration and Problem-Solving Skills
 - When students don’t eat breakfast, they may feel sluggish and struggle to focus.
3. Supports Healthy Weight Management and Nutrition
 - Eating breakfast helps to prevent overeating later in the day and allows students to get their essential nutrients like fiber, calcium and iron.
4. Reduces the Risk of Chronic Disease
 - Research studies have shown that skipping breakfast can increase the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
5. Improves Mood and Emotional Well-being
 - A balanced breakfast helps stabilize blood sugar levels, preventing mood swings and irritability.

If you have questions about nutrition, a community health worker can help. Visit communityhealth.uams.edu to connect with one today.

Sheldon Riklon, M.D., is a professor in the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Department of Family and Preventive Medicine and a co-investigator with the UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation.