

Press release

Deutsches Diabetes-Zentrum

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Eating Breakfast Regularly Reduces the Risk of Type 2 Diabetes

Eat or skip breakfast? Does eating breakfast regularly have an effect on the risk of diabetes? – Research has not yet provided clear answers to these questions. Around 20 percent of the German population skips breakfast in the morning. In the age group of 18-29 years the rate is even higher – around 50 percent. A scientific evaluation at the German Diabetes Center (DDZ) has now shown that adult men and women who skip breakfast have a 33 percent higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes. These findings were published in the current issue of Journal of Nutrition.

Epidemiological studies have shown that skipping breakfast is associated with a risk of type 2 diabetes. However, until now it has not been possible to prove which role obesity plays in this context. Obesity is a major risk factor for the development of type 2 diabetes. Research indicates that obese people are more likely to skip breakfast than those of normal weight. Moreover, it is currently being discussed whether skipping breakfast in itself is associated with weight gain.

The research team led by Dr. Sabrina Schlesinger, head of the junior research group Systematic Reviews at the DDZ, compared men and women in six long-term studies, taking into account the body mass Index (BMI). The results of the study show a dose-response relationship: as the number of no-breakfast days increased, so did the risk of diabetes. The greatest risk was observed for skipping breakfast four to five days per week. No increase in risk was determined after the fifth no-breakfast day. "This correlation is partly due to the influence of overweight. Even after taking into account the BMI, skipping breakfast was associated with an increased risk of diabetes," Schlesinger said.

Study

In the meta-analysis, the research team summarized the data from six different international observational studies. In total, data from 96,175 participants, 4,935 of whom fell ill with type 2 diabetes during the course of the study, were evaluated. One explanation for the link between not having breakfast and the risk of type 2 diabetes could be a healthy lifestyle per se. Participants who do not eat breakfast may generally have a less favorable diet, for example in that they consume high-calorie snacks and drinks, are less physically active, or smoke more. However, these factors were taken into account in the evaluation so that the observed relationship could possibly be explained by other factors. "Further studies are needed to elucidate not only the mechanisms of eating breakfast regularly but also the influence of the composition of the breakfast on diabetes risk," Schlesinger said. "In principle, a regular and balanced breakfast is recommended for all people – with and without diabetes."

Original publication:

Ballon A, Neuenschwander M, Schlesinger S. Breakfast skipping is associated with increased risk of type 2 diabetes among adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies. J Nutr 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jn/nxy194>