

Elizabeth: Hello, everybody and welcome back to the Primal Potential Podcast. I am Elizabeth Benton. I'm tackling your questions again today, specifically your questions about breakfast and how to make the first meal of the day a fat-burning meal no matter what time that meal comes at. You guys know I am a huge fan of the fat loss breakfast. I talk about it all the time. I have done a number of episodes all the way back to Q&A-6 on breakfast. I'm going to link to them in the show notes because I'm not going to duplicate too much of the information I've already put out there. I will link to those quick, quick little thought about older shows.

I know many of you listen to this podcast on iTunes. Whether you use the podcast player app that comes native on iPhones or any other way, I want to just remind you guys that iTunes limits the number of shows that display from a podcast to the last 100. We have well over 300 shows now despite the fact that this one is numbered 290. I didn't use the number to Q&A-1. It gets confusing. Anyway, you might be thinking, "I can't go back that far." Yes, you can. You can go back all the way to the beginning either on primalpotential.com. If you hit the podcast tab, every single episode is there, as well as a link to play it and or download it.

Also, if you are listening via Spotify, Spotify is another app, where you can listen to podcasts and that does not limit it. For those of you that are like, "I can't get back to Q&A-6." Yes, you can. You just can't through iTunes, so we just have to get a little creative, which means you can listen to it on the site. You can download it from the site, and I mean primalpotential.com or you can use Spotify. Just wanted to clear that up for people who are frustrated not being able to access older shows. That is an iTunes limitation. If you're not listening on iTunes, don't worry about it.

All right. I will link to those past episodes that I've done on breakfast. If you have questions about breakfast, definitely hit those up first before getting frustrated or trying to Google answers or shooting me an e-mail. There's probably answers in the episodes that I will link to including Q&A-6. Then I think the other one is 115, but I might be wrong about that number. No sweat though because by the time you hear this, I will have link to it on the show notes page over at primalpotential.com.

The reason I'm doing this episode now, there are a couple of reasons. Number one, I've been getting a surprising amount of e-mails about breakfast, and a surprising number of e-mails about lemon water in the morning. Just the number of e-mails, I thought, "Well, a lot of people are wondering about this. I'm going to address it." Then the other reason is one of my fat loss fast track groups recently went through a breakfast challenge optimizing their fat loss breakfast, and so a lot of great questions came up there. There was a lot of confusion or common struggles. I thought, "This is a great time to tackle this," because honestly, it really does matter.

I'm sure most of us have heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the

day. That is not what we have been told by people who sell us food, right? When we saw breakfast cereals being introduced and breakfast bars and pop tarts and all of these other things, we started to hear that it jump starts your metabolism. It's not that we need to eat immediately upon waking. That is not what makes breakfast the most important meal of the day. It's because it sets up our hormonal condition for the rest of the day. That means our ability to burn fat, that means our energy, it means our control of our hunger.

If we make strategic choices for the first meal of the day, whether that's 5 a.m., 9 a.m. or 2 p.m. or if you're a night worker, first meal of the day might be 6:00 at night, right? Whatever time your first meal of the day is, those choices you make for that meal really matter because they are setting up the hormonal conditions for the rest of the day, so it will impact your ability to burn fat or your propensity to store fat. It will impact your energy, your hunger, your cravings, your mood, your ability to sleep later in the day, and so much more. We're going to be talking about that, that first fuel you introduce into your system. It really matters.

Now, I'm going to recap some breakfast basics, but let me say this. Many of you are probably extremely familiar with what a fat loss breakfast is and means because I've talked about it so much here on this podcast or maybe you've been through a fat loss fast track or something like that. Let me say this. Do not discount this episode or this information because you think you know because here's the reality about information. We only absorb a small percentage of the information we hear, and that is why so many times you'll say, "I know you've said this before, but today it clicked."

Listen through this because I'm going to be tackling some of the most common questions. They might be questions you have or you might think you have the answer, but maybe you're misunderstanding it a little bit. There might be something in this for you even if you feel like you've nailed your breakfast. I think it's really important for everybody to understand how they can make it better. Sometimes it's not what you don't know that gets you in trouble, it's what you think you know that isn't true.

You might think you have the answers about breakfast, but there might be something in this episode that you might say, "Oh, my gosh! I didn't even realize that, and yeah, I am feeling tired at this particular time," or "This isn't really working for me." I hope that you will all go through this episode with an open mind.

I told you guys that some of my fat loss fast track clients were working through a breakfast challenge. I got an e-mail from one of them, which I'm going to share with you right now because it lays the foundation for some of the questions that we are going to tackle, as well as some of the explanations I want to provide right out of the gate.

The e-mail goes like this. "The weirdest thing happened to me this week. I

realized I have been eating the wrong breakfast all my life, and it's been affecting my whole day. After trying out your breakfast strategy of eating fat and protein, I realized that it held me off for several hours, has made me more productive at work because I don't get hungry. I've even been less stressed even though my surroundings haven't changed. I also find myself eating less throughout the day, and I'm not hungry the next morning.

However, I think I might be eating too much in the morning. For the past few days, I've been having eggs, meat and half an avocado. Is that too much? I also don't understand why it's so different because I've been eating eggs in the past and haven't experienced this benefit. What'd different? Is it the carbohydrates?"

There's so much in this e-mail, but the first thing I want to say is if you optimize the first meal of the day, whether that is what you eat at 6 a.m., 9 a.m., 12 noon, 2 p.m. or 6 p.m., whatever your first meal after waking is, it will impact everything. It will impact your energy, your hunger, your cravings. It will impact your productivity because I'm sorry, there's very little that is more distracting than being really hungry or having overwhelming cravings. This is not something that is just about losing weight. It's not something that's just about health. It really is about improving your entire day.

In order to explain where these benefits comes from before we get to the common questions about breakfast, I want to review the impact of the first meal we have after waking on our hormones because this is really the reason that it impacts so much our ability and likelihood of burning fat, our propensity to store fat or not, our energy, cravings, mood, sleep, productivity, focus, all of that.

We're coming at this with the goal of fat loss, okay? If your goal is not fat loss, then I've done some other episodes on breakfast as far as carb tolerance and carb timing that might be more valuable to you. What I'm about to explain to you is coming from the standpoint of understanding how what we eat as our first meal after waking, independent of the time, has such a significant impact on fat loss. It also impacts energy and hunger and cravings and mood and focus and productivity and all of that sort of stuff too. Just understand that that's the perspective I'm coming at here.

Fat loss is about your hormones, right? Calories absolutely matter, but hormones matter more because you can have a calorie deficit, as in less than what your body needs, and not burn fat because you haven't created the right hormonal environment. Yeah, calories matter, but at the end of the day, it is hormonal signals that determine whether you are burning fat or storing it. Period, the end.

The number one thing that influences our hormones and the messages they send, whether that's, "Hey, burn fat," or "Hey, store fat," is food. The number one thing that impacts our hormones is what we eat. This is why when people e-

mail me and they freak out like, "I just can't exercise consistently," or "I've been injured and I'm not able to do my workouts," I say, "Don't worry about it." I mean, I love to work out and it's healthy and it's functional and it's important, but it is not the primary driver of fat loss. The primary driver of fat loss is what you eat because what you eat determines what hormonal signals you're sending to your body and whether you're allowing for fat loss or not.

Nothing influences your hormones more than food, and not all foods impact your hormones in the same way. Protein is going to send different hormonal signals than fat than carbs, and carbohydrates are going to have a more significant impact on hormones than any other macronutrients. Carbohydrates are going to influence your hormones more than protein, more than fat.

One thing I've share before when I've done episodes about the carb cycle is something that frustrated the heck out of me. I grew up in a very traditional American household where you come downstairs for breakfast, you'd pour yourself a glass of orange juice, you'd open up the cabinet, grab a box of cereal, pour yourself a bowl, right? Cereal? Carbohydrate. Juice? Carbohydrate. Twenty-five minutes later, I'm wondering why I'm hungry again, right?

I've barely put my dish in the sink or the dishwasher for those of us that are neurotic about not leaving dishes in the sink, hand raised, I was hungry right afterwards or you have a bagel and it's a big bagel and it's delicious and it's satisfying. An hour later, all you can think about is sugar or you want to put your head down and take a nap or you feel like you need a snack, right? I think we've all been there.

When we start the day, now the day means different things, so when your first meal after waking because it does not matter if we are talking about you get up at five and eat at six or you get up at five and eat at 10 or you get up at eight and eat at nine, whatever. I don't care if you get up at 6 p.m. and eat at 7 p.m. That first meal after waking, when we start with carbohydrates, whether that's granola and fruit or a bagel, cereal, pancakes, juice, you name it, we set ourselves up to prevent fat burning and to trigger hunger and cravings and energy swings. I feel really charged up, I'm ready to go, and now I need a nap, right?

The reason that this happens is because of the unique hormonal environment in the body after we've been fasting. Now, you've been fasting while you've been sleeping. I'm not talking about an intentional fast, I'm talking about maybe you ate last at 7:30 last night, and then you don't eat again until 7:30 in the morning. That is a 12-hour fasting period. There is a unique hormonal environment in the body after an overnight fast when we wake up. Again, this is true if you sleep during the day because you're a night worker or whatever else.

When we wake, our blood sugar and insulin tend to be low. Now, diabetics, take exception. This can vary, but I'm talking about non-diabetics because I am not a medical doctor, and you will not hear me talking about medical conditions on

this podcast. Anyway, normally speaking, when you wake up, your blood sugar and your insulin levels are low because you've been fasting while you have been sleeping. Because of this, we will have an exaggerated response in the morning to consuming carbohydrates.

If you've been around me for a while, and I know we've got a lot of new listeners, so I'm going to say this again, and also because sometimes we just hear something we hadn't heard before. You know I like this analogy of being in a pitch-black room. I want you to think about this unique hormonal condition in the morning as if you had been in a dark room overnight for 12 hours, pitch-black, no light, no electronics emitting light, no curtains to have light peek through, a totally pitch-black room, all right?

After 12 hours, somebody comes in and flips on a floodlight. Your eyes would have an exaggerated response from pitch-black to bright, bright light. Whoa! It might hurt a little bit. You would squint. Your pupils would be going crazy because you've been in a dark room, right? Imagine that you've been sitting outside all day hanging out, maybe doing yard work, playing with the kids, and somebody comes outside and plugs in to the outside outlet that same floodlight and turns it on. You might not even notice. If you did, you certainly wouldn't really react to it. You'd be like, "Oh, a light," but you would not have that exaggerated response of squinting your eyes and your pupils reacting. You wouldn't because you'd been out in the sun, so your body was acclimated to it, right?

This is the situation that happens after an overnight fast when we wake up, right? Introducing carbs in the morning is like turning on that floodlight after being in that dark room for hours and hours. Your body's been fasting. Your fuel is low, so you're going to have this exaggerated blood sugar and insulin response in the morning like, "Whoa! What was that?" The reason that impairs fat burning is because of what insulin is and does, all right?

You cannot burn fat when insulin is high. When insulin is elevated, you cannot burn fat. Now, the reason you don't have this exaggerated response if you have protein in the morning or fat in the morning is because protein and fat do not impact insulin the same way that carbohydrates do. Protein does impact insulin more than fat. Fat impacts insulin the least. Carbs impacts insulin the most. Protein is I'd say in the middle, but closer to the low end like fat. Carbs really drive insulin. You cannot burn fat when insulin is high and introducing carbs in the morning, you get this exaggerated response just like your eyes would have an exaggerated response to light after being in a dark room for so long.

Insulin is a fuel delivery hormone. The presence of insulin lets your body know, "Hey, hey. We've got fuel, so we need to find some place to put it. We are in storage mode now. Officially, body, we are in storage mode." That message of, "Hey, we are taking fuel and putting it places," lets the body know do not break down anymore fuel because we're dealing with what we have here, okay?

Your body doesn't need to break down fat for energy when blood sugar and insulin are elevated. When you consume carbs in the morning, you create this exaggerated response, which means a larger surge of blood sugar and a more significant insulin response than any other time, right? The result of that when we have the cereal, the juice, the muffin, the bagel, whatever else, the granola, more time out of fat burning mode compared to if we had a breakfast that did not trigger that exaggerated blood sugar and insulin response, right?

Now, that's the fat burning side of things. The other side of things is how it impacts energy and cravings because when we create this exaggerated blood sugar and insulin reaction in the morning by consuming the granola, the cereal, the bagel, the muffin, the croissant, whatever else, we experience compensatory reactions that are the reason for the low energy, the fatigue, the cravings, and the immediate return of hunger, the quick return to, "I think I need a snack."

That's why when I read that e-mail from one of my clients not being hungry later in the day, not having as many cravings, it's because we stay out of what I call the carb cycle. When we introduce carbs in the morning, especially that first meal after waking, we just step right into this carb cycle. What that means is we have this higher carb meal, juice, granola, cereal, bagel, fruit, whatever, blood sugar goes up. Energy goes up with it. Remember, it's this exaggerated reaction because of our overnight fasting period.

Well, when we have this exaggerated blood sugar response, we have an exaggerated insulin response because insulin is the usher that clears the sugar from the blood. If your blood sugar just stays high and insulin isn't deployed to usher that sugar out of the blood, it can become toxic. It's not optional. When blood sugar goes up, insulin is deployed. The more blood sugar goes up, the more insulin is deployed. Remember, you are not burning fat when insulin is elevated. The more your blood sugar goes up either because of what you ate or the volume you ate or both, more insulin, more time out of fat burning mode, right? The smaller the insulin reaction, the less time out of fat burning mode. The larger the insulin response and reaction, the more time out of fat burning mode.

When we have this exaggerated insulin or blood sugar response, we have an exaggerated insulin reaction. Well, blood sugar was high and energy was high, but then we got this exaggerated insulin response and whoosh! What was high comes crashing down and the higher the peak, the lower the valley. When you get to that low valley, and sometimes it's only 20, 30, 40 minutes after you ate, your body doesn't know how to say, "Hey, it's time to get going. It's time to pick your blood sugar off the floor." It can't tell you that, so it triggers you with hunger and cravings. That's why when you have the muffin, when you have the bagel, when you have the cereal, you're hungry quickly thereafter, and you tend to have more cravings.

This comes also with an increased in stress hormones. We get this anxious,

irritable, frustrated, trouble-focusing sensation. If we respond with a soda, if we respond with a cookie or a candy bar or another bowl of cereal, we're just right back in that cycle, and it becomes harder and harder and harder to step out of it. This is why it is so important to understand the importance of fat and protein and or fiber from non-starchy vegetables in the morning.

I'm not going to get into the other hormonal things like the cortisol reaction, and why carbs at night makes sense because I've done that in other podcasts. I go way into that in the fat loss fast tracks. I'm not going to do that here, but I wanted to lay this foundation, so that I can get to these questions about breakfast.

One question that a lot of people will have is, "Okay. So what do I eat?" I've talked about that at length in Q&A-6, and then I think the other one is episode 115. I go really deep into it in fat loss fast track. I'm not going to get too far into that. I will link to resources in the show notes page, but I want to with the foundation established here go into some of the questions.

Some people will say, "Well, when I was on Weight Watchers, I was having rice cakes for breakfast every morning, and those are carbs and I was losing weight." Great point. Here's the important thing to remember. You always can get results when you do what represents an improvement for you, right? Let's say that your standard breakfast had been a muffin and a latte with sugar, and you switched it out for rice cakes, well, guess what? There's less total carbohydrates, so there's going to be less of a blood sugar response, less of an insulin reaction, and you're going to get results.

I am all for what represents an improvement for you, and I'm very honest about the fact that when I first started my non-dieting forever journey with this, I was having chick filet for breakfast every morning. One of my first steps was just to cut that in half. Is that the perfect fat loss breakfast? No, it's not, but your body responds to what represents an improvement for you. Guys, do not get hung up on this idea of perfection, and it's either bagels and muffins or it's eggs and bacon. No, it's not like that. It really is about what represents an improvement for you.

A lot of people also want to know, "Well, why is it that my personal trainer or my skinny sister can have a bagel for breakfast every single morning and she's not fat or he's not fat." Let's understand that this is not about gaining weight. We're talking about burning fat, right? If your goal is to burn fat, that is very different from somebody who is maintaining their weight, right? The hormonal environment for fat burning is unique. Your personal trainer or your skinny sister, they're not looking to create the hormonal environment for fat burning.

The other thing that is a huge factor here is individual carbohydrate tolerance. I've done several episodes on what carbohydrate tolerance is, how to know what yours is and how to improve it. I'll link to those in the show notes as well. The reality is we all have a different carbohydrate tolerance. The more your

weight has yo-yoed, or the more hormonal imbalances you have, chances are the less carb tolerant you're going to be.

There are things you can do to improve your carbohydrate tolerance from a nutrition standpoint, as well as from a fitness standpoint, as well as from a hormone standpoint, and combinations of all of the above, but we're not all built the same way, right? I know for sure that my carbohydrate tolerance is very, very different from my skinny sister's, and that's just the way it is. Doesn't mean we're fixed in our carbohydrate tolerance. There's a lot we can do to improve it. Everybody is different here. Fundamentally, there is a significant difference between what is required to maintain your weight or maintain a lean frame versus what you're trying to do in the hormonal environment you need if your goal is to burn fat.

All right. One question that comes up a lot is shift work. I think somebody e-mailed me the other day and they're like, "Shift work is becoming more and more common." I don't know if that's true or not, but I have no reason to not believe it. Whether it's common or not isn't the point. The same principles apply. When I use the word breakfast, I'm referring to it literally in terms of break the fast. Break, fast, these breakfast principles apply to the first meal of your day whether that is a traditional morning breakfast or it's later in the day because you're not hungry or it's in the evening because you are a shift worker, which leads to another question, which is, "Do I have to eat right when I wake?" No.

If you're hungry, eat. If you're not, wait. Listen to your body. That's it. What works best for you. I don't eat when I'm not hungry because the clock says whatever. You know what? Some days, I'm not very hungry, and people will e-mail me, "Oh, my gosh! I had your fat loss breakfast, and it's 9:30 at night and I'm not hungry." All right. We'll see how you feel tomorrow because our hormones impact our appetite. What satisfies you for three hours one day might satisfy you for 12 hours another and one hour another. It depends on how much you're sleeping. It depends on your activity level. It depends on what you ate the day before, so many different things. Listen to your body, right? Your body has far more answers than I do.

Another question I often get and this was mentioned in the e-mail that I read to you guys earlier is how much food is too much at breakfast. This idea of, "Am I eating too much?" or people will say, "I've had bulletproof coffee and eggs. Is that too much?" If you're like, "What is bulletproof coffee?" Go to primalpotential.com, search bulletproof coffee and you'll see a couple of podcasts I've done on that, as well as a detailed Q&A or do and don't posts, so definitely check that out.

Here's the thing that I want everybody to fundamentally accept. The idea of how much is too much at breakfast is not about just breakfast. It's about the rest of the day. For example, if you have a huge breakfast, that might be totally fine if you eat lighter throughout the rest of the day or you're really active. If

you have a tiny breakfast, that might be totally fine if your latter meals are heavier.

The key is number one, listen to your body. Are you eating to eat or are you eating that much in the morning because you're legitimately hungry? Number two, is it working for you? Are you making progress towards your goals? Some people do much better not having breakfasts or having a very small light breakfast like maybe a handful of almonds or a single hard-boiled egg or half a cup of bulletproof coffee and then eating more later in the day. Other people feel like they eat a lot less if breakfast is their heaviest meal of the day. The only way to find your answers, there is no magic answer here, is to pay attention to what works for you.

Another common question about breakfast is, "For how long should it hold me over?" Within the fat loss fast track, we work on this a lot over the course of 12 weeks together because what I have found is a lot of people are making choices on their breakfast based on what they think is healthy or an improvement or fat loss friendly, but it totally doesn't work for them. The example I use most often is protein bars. There's a specific brand, whatever. I don't care. I'll say it. There a lot of people who will eat a Quest Bar for breakfast because it feels indulgent, and it's convenient, but they're eating again an hour later, and they're craving sweet things throughout the day. If it's not working for you, stop eating it, right?

As far as how long a meal should hold you over for, it really depends. For me personally, me Elizabeth in my own life, I prefer to eat fewer times throughout the day and eat more than to eat more often and just a little bit. Some people are totally the opposite. For me, I don't like to think about and make food choices seven times throughout the day because I find it distracting and it's just more work. If I can make two or three food choices in a day, that is easier for me personally than having to make seven to 10 with all of these snacks and mini meals. Other people prefer to eat more often.

For me, I am looking for a meal that is going to satisfy me for four to five hours. Other people, there's nothing wrong if your meal satisfies you for two hours because you prefer to eat more often. The question is, is it working for you? Are you getting the results that you want? Fundamentally, you have to know yourself and know what do you prefer, not only what works for your lifestyle, what's getting you results?

All right. This next question I eluded to earlier, people have been saying, "I know you say no carbs in the morning, but I like to start my day with a glass of warm water with some lemon juice. Is the lemon juice going to take me out of fat burning mode?" I want to say this first and foremost. Let's remember this idea of big rocks, things that really make a difference and small rocks like don't sweat the small stuff. There is nobody in the world who is overweight or not reaching their goals because of a cup of lemon water in the morning. Yes, lemon is a fruit. Yes, fruit contains carbohydrates.

If you are sitting and having seven lemons, peeling them and eating them in the morning, I might say, "You probably know the number on your blood sugar." If you are taking a lemon and squeezing some of the juice from it, am I going to tell you it's sugar-free? No. Do I think it's going to move the needle and be a thing that keeps you from getting results? Absolutely not. Is there any magic to lemon water? I think the magic of lemon water is the water, is rehydrating in the morning. There are a million people that will talk about acid and da-da-da-da-da, whatever. I think it's just such a small rock. There is nobody who is reaching or not reaching their goals because of a little bit of lemon juice in their water.

Another question that came up was, "Are paleo pancakes fat loss friendly?" There's this long conversation in one of my fat loss fast tracks about this. I would say there are a trillion ways to make paleo pancakes. Some of which include flours that are plant-based, but very high carb, and wouldn't be too much different than a bowl of cereal in terms of ultimately their impact on the blood sugar, right? Your blood sugar doesn't know if it's a Twinkie or if it's some plant powder that is primarily sugar.

The key here is does it represent an improvement for you? Does it satisfy your hunger? Does it trigger more cravings or eliminate cravings? Are you making progress towards your goal when you eat it? Are there going to be potential recipes out there that are totally fat loss friendly and get you results? Absolutely. Are there going to be ones where you might as well have a pop tart? Absolutely. If you Google paleo pancakes, you'll probably find 100,000 or more recipes, probably closer to a million realistically, and some of them are going to be fat loss friendly and some of them aren't.

The other thing to remember is it's relative to you. If you are going from three donuts from Dunkin and a mocaccino to two paleo pancakes, that's an improvement, even if they are a higher sugar version of paleo pancakes made with a banana, right? It just depends on what represents an improvement for you. Instead of looking to Google for the answers, look to your body for the answers. How do I feel when I eat this? Does it satisfy my hunger? For how long? How is my energy? Do I have more cravings with this kind of breakfast or fewer cravings? Am I getting the results that I want?

The same is true with fruit. Fruit does drive a blood sugar response, but is it an improvement for you? When I have fruit in the morning, it negatively impacts my fat burning and it increases my cravings and it doesn't satisfy my hunger, so it's a no go for me, but that doesn't mean it's a no go for you. If it's an improvement, if it satisfies your hunger and if you're getting the results you want, boom! There you go.

The other thing when it comes to what to eat, and like I said, I have when you sign up on the VIP e-mail list, which you can get on right on the homepage of primalpotential.com, you get a free PDF with 100 fat loss meal ideas. I would say about a third of which are breakfast ideas. Also, those episodes I've done before

that I will link to. I've talked about a ton of breakfast ideas. Think beyond bacon and eggs, guys. Get a little bit creative. One of my favorite fat loss meals that I talk about all the time is my cabbage salad breakfast bowl. Love that or you could do smoked salmon or you could do dinner leftovers.

I would really encourage you to think outside of the box when it comes to breakfast. I hope these questions were helpful for you. I will chat with you guys soon. I hope you have a really great day. Take care.