

No. 1: Power Porridge

So named because it helps you hit three targets in one - take 10 minutes out of your day to make this porridge and 'Get your oats', 'Switch to soya' and get 2 of your 8-10 a day before you even leave the house.

Both oats and soya have been found to lower the 'bad' cholesterol in your blood. The slow release carbohydrate in oats helps to balance your blood sugar and the plant sterols in soya help to balance your hormones and maybe even reduce your blood pressure leading to a mellow, sustainable start to the day. Take a deep breath and say Ahhhh.....

Ingredients (1 portion)

½ a cup of large oats (lower GI than the small ones)

1 cup of Soya milk

Pinch of salt

3 dried apricots

½ a large banana (or 1 small one)

Apricot yogurt

Optional maple syrup (if you can't do without - or try adding apple juice instead of some of the milk for a sweeter mix)

- 1. Put the oats, milk & salt into a thick based sauce pan. Chop each apricot into about 6 pieces (easiest with scissors) and add to the mix.**
- 2. Bring to a simmer and leave for 5 minutes stirring occasionally.**
- 3. Chop the banana into small pieces and add to the pan. Simmer & stir for a further 5 minutes until the oats are fully swollen. Add some water during this stage if it gets thicker than you like.**
- 4. Serve with a spoonful or two of yogurt on top and a dash of maple syrup if you have a very sweet tooth.**

Top Tips

- Eat ½ a grapefruit and a small glass of orange juice with this breakfast and you are nearly half way to 8-10 a day before you can say 'roughage'.
- The absorption of the type of iron in plant material like oats (non-haem iron) is inhibited by the tannins in tea and coffee (and red wine but I'm hoping that won't be a problem at breakfast). So, if

you want to take full advantage of the power in this porridge try holding back your first caffeine shot for a couple of hours and drinking Rooibos (red bush) tea instead (it has even more antioxidants than black or green tea and none of the tannins or caffeine). Incidentally, the vitamin C in the grapefruit and orange juice actively promotes the absorption of non-haem iron and you'll be pleased to know that the absorption of haem iron in meat is not inhibited by tannins so you can still have red wine with your (small) steak in the evening.

- Short of time in the morning? Usually eat your breakfast at work or on the train? Invest in a wide necked vacuum food flask and take your porridge with you.
- Final tip - the best bit of cooking kit I bought this year was a double boiler (gorgeous old enamel one from an antique shop actually but I think you can still get them new). It suspends my porridge over a pan of hot water so it never burns and I don't have to stand over it and stir. I can nip down stairs in the morning; put my porridge on then go back upstairs to shower and change leaving my breakfast to cook itself. Also great for making creamy sauces and melting chocolate (allegedly ☺).