

Simple overnight oats

Try it once. Make it yours. Then prep ahead for easier mornings.

A simple, satisfying breakfast made from everyday foods, packed with fibre and protein. Make it the night before and breakfast is waiting for you in the morning.

MAKES 1 PORTION · PREP 5 MINUTES · REFRIGERATE OVERNIGHT

Start with one portion

Your base ingredients	Amount
Rolled porridge oats (organic if you can - see "Choosing your oats")	50 g
Unsweetened milk (or plant milk -ideally fortified soya milk for extra protein)	150 ml
Plain Greek yoghurt or unsweetened soya yoghurt	100 g
Chia seeds	1 tbsp (about 12 g)
Ground cinnamon (optional)	½ tsp

Three easy steps

1

Mix

Add the oats, milk, yoghurt, chia seeds and cinnamon to a jar or covered container. Stir well.

2

Chill overnight

Refrigerate for at least 6 hours so the oats and chia seeds soften.

3

Stir and top

In the morning, stir and add a splash of milk if needed. Scoop into a bowl and add your favourite topping.

TRY THIS

Make it yours. Try the recipe once before making a large batch. Prefer softer oats? Add a little more milk. Want a bigger breakfast? Increase the oats or yoghurt. Smaller appetite? Start with 40 g oats and a little less milk.

Choose a topping - or mix and match

- Berries + a spoonful of mixed nuts and seeds
- Banana slices + a teaspoon of peanut butter
- Chopped apple + walnuts + cinnamon
- Strawberries + chopped hazelnuts
- Kiwi slices + pumpkin seeds

Fruit, nuts and seeds bring extra flavour, texture, fibre and nutrients. There is no need to add honey or syrup unless you particularly enjoy it.

Tip: add kiwi just before eating. It contains a natural enzyme that can make milk and yoghurt taste bitter if left to sit overnight.

Prep once, enjoy over the next few mornings

Once you know you enjoy the base, multiply the ingredients below. Mix in one covered container, refrigerate, and use a clean spoon to serve one portion each morning. Add toppings just before eating.

Ingredient	1 portion	2 portions	3 portions	4 portions
Rolled oats	50 g	100 g	150 g	200 g
Milk	150 ml	300 ml	450 ml	600 ml
Yoghurt	100 g	200 g	300 g	400 g
Chia seeds	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	3 tbsp	4 tbsp
Cinnamon	½ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp	2 tsp

Storage. For a simple, cautious routine, prepare 2-3 days at a time. Cover, chill promptly at 5°C or below, and always use a clean spoon. The mixture keeps thickening, so loosen it with a splash of milk if needed.

Nutrition at a glance - base only

Approximate values for one portion made with 50 g rolled oats, 150 ml unsweetened soya milk, 100 g fat-free Greek yoghurt (FAGE Total 0%) and 12 g chia seeds, without toppings.

Energy	Protein	Fibre	Carbohydrate	Fat
~350 kcal	~23-24 g	~9-10 g	~37 g	~10 g

Values vary by brand and your choice of milk and yoghurt. Oat or almond milk and some plant-based yoghurts contain much less protein. Toppings are extra.

Why oats deserve a place in your bowl

Oats are one of the most researched foods in nutrition science. Much of their power comes from beta-glucan - a special soluble fibre that turns into a soft gel in your gut. Here is what the evidence shows.

Heart health	Helps lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol. The gel traps cholesterol-rich bile in your gut so it leaves your body, and your liver then pulls more cholesterol out of your blood to make fresh bile. Reviews of dozens of trials show a small but meaningful drop in LDL cholesterol - a benefit officially recognised by UK and European food safety authorities.
Steadier blood sugar	Softens blood sugar spikes. Beta-glucan slows how quickly carbohydrate is digested and absorbed - another officially recognised benefit. In people living with type 2 diabetes, eating oats regularly has been shown to improve longer-term blood sugar control (HbA1c).
Blood pressure	A gentle helping hand. Trials suggest oat beta-glucan can lower blood pressure slightly. On its own that is a small change - but small changes alongside other everyday habits add up.
Gut health	Keeps things moving. Oat fibre adds bulk and helps keep you regular (also officially recognised). Beta-glucan feeds your friendly gut bacteria, which turn it into short-chain fatty acids that help nourish the lining of your gut. Research here is growing fast.
Feeling full	Satisfying for longer. The thick, gel-like fibre slows how quickly your stomach empties, which may help you feel full for longer. Results vary between people, so notice how it works for you.
Long-term health	A whole grain that counts. Large studies following hundreds of thousands of people link eating more whole grains and fibre with a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and bowel cancer, and a longer life. Most of us in the UK eat less fibre than recommended, so every bowl helps.
Natural goodness	More than fibre. Oats contain avenanthramides - antioxidant compounds found almost only in oats - plus minerals such as manganese, phosphorus, magnesium, iron and zinc. Avenanthramides calm inflammation in early research, though we need more human studies to know what this means for health.
Kind to your budget	Affordable and long-lasting. Oats are one of the cheapest nutritious foods you can buy, keep for months in the cupboard and need no cooking for this recipe.

What the other ingredients add. Chia seeds add more fibre and plant omega-3 fats. Yoghurt and soya milk add calcium which is important for bone health, and protein, which matters for maintaining muscle and helps keep you full. Together, the mix of fibre, protein and fat may help moderate your blood sugar response, although everyone responds differently. There is no need to avoid whole fruits because of their natural sugar.

Living with insulin resistance or type 2 diabetes?

Oats can absolutely be part of your breakfast - studies in people with type 2 diabetes show regular oats can improve blood sugar control. These optional tweaks can help soften the rise in blood sugar after eating:

- Start with a little less oats (around 30-40 g) and add extra Greek or soya yoghurt.
- Choose rolled or jumbo oats rather than instant oats.
- Pair fruit with nuts, seeds or nut butter - berries are a great everyday choice.
- Go for a short walk after breakfast. Gentle movement after eating is one of the simplest ways to steady your blood sugar.
- If you use a glucose monitor, notice how your body responds and adjust from there - everyone is different.

If you take insulin or other diabetes medicines, speak to your healthcare team before making big changes to what you eat.

Choosing your oats: organic if you can

You may have heard concerns about pesticides in oats. Here is a calm, balanced look at what we know - so you can make the choice that is right for you.

What is used on oats? Conventionally grown oats are commonly treated with chlormequat, a growth regulator that stops tall oat stalks from falling over before harvest. Glyphosate, a weedkiller, is also sometimes sprayed on cereal crops shortly before harvest to dry them out. Small traces of both can end up in oat foods.

Is that a problem? UK government testing shows residues in food are almost always within legal safety limits. However, scientists are still learning about the effects of long-term, low-level exposure. Chlormequat has affected fertility and development in animal studies, although harm has not been shown in people at the levels found in food. A 2024 study found chlormequat in around four in five people tested, with oat foods thought to be a main source.

What difference does organic make? Organic farming does not allow these synthetic chemicals. A major review of 343 studies found pesticide residues were around four times more common in conventional crops than organic ones, and testing of oat products found little or no chlormequat in organic options.

The bottom line. If organic oats fit your budget, they are a simple swap that lowers your exposure - and oats are one of the more affordable organic foods, especially in larger bags or supermarket own-brand ranges.

If organic is not an option for you right now, regular oats are still an excellent choice. The proven benefits of eating oats far outweigh the small, uncertain risk from residues. Anything is better than nothing.

Living with coeliac disease? Oats are naturally gluten-free but are often contaminated with wheat, barley or rye during growing and milling. Choose oats labelled gluten-free (organic gluten-free oats are available). Most people with coeliac disease can eat these, but a small number react to avenin, a protein found in oats - check with your GP or dietitian first.

A note from Doctor Wendy

Healthy eating needn't be complicated or expensive. Start with one breakfast you enjoy, adjust it to suit you, then make a little more next time. Small, sustainable habits matter more than perfection - and every bowl is a small investment in your heart, your gut and your future self.

Pills don't teach skills. Learning one simple, nourishing breakfast you can make on autopilot is a skill that keeps on giving - and it puts you in the driving seat of your own health.

Want more protein? Add extra Greek yoghurt or choose a protein-rich unsweetened soya yoghurt.

Important

Check ingredient labels for allergens - notably milk, soya, nuts, seeds and possible gluten cross-contact. If your healthcare team has given you specific dietary advice, follow that first. This is general nutrition information, not individual medical advice.

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General healthy-eating information only - not personal medical or dietetic advice, and not a substitute for advice from your own doctor, dietitian or healthcare team. If you have a medical condition, a food allergy or intolerance (including coeliac disease), or take regular medication, check with them before making significant changes to your diet. Always check ingredient labels, as brands vary and may contain allergens. Doctor Wendy content is independent and is not produced or endorsed by the NHS. To the fullest extent permitted by law, no liability is accepted for any loss or harm arising from use of this information.

EVIDENCE BASE

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DISCLOSURES

Brand names are mentioned for nutritional accuracy only. Doctor Wendy has no commercial relationship with any brand named in this resource.