

THE GOODNESS OF WHOLE GRAINS

Nutrition News You Can Use



Learn about the health benefits of including whole grains in your daily diet

What are whole grains?

Wheat, oats, brown rice, rye, corn and barley are all whole grains. Actually all grains start out as whole grains. The term 'whole' simply means that no part of the grain has been removed during processing. It is this basic fact that makes whole grains different and more nutritious. Foods made from whole grains have all of the original nutritional benefits of the natural grains they are made from. This makes whole grains an essential part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Why are whole grains so good for you?

Whole grains and foods made from them contain many beneficial nutrients. Each part of the grain is important. The outside of the grain provides fiber, B-vitamins, and minerals. The starchy center of the grain is rich in carbohydrates and protein. The smallest part of the grain contains vitamin E, as well as antioxidants and B vitamins. It is the combination of all three parts of a whole grain that provide the body with so many health benefits.

How are whole grains different from 'refined' grains?

Refined grains are made when processing removes parts of the natural grain. For example, the outer layer of brown rice is removed to make white rice. White bread compared with whole grain bread also shows the difference. White bread is made with wheat processed to remove the outer layers and other beneficial parts. Foods made with refined grains, like white bread, tend to be lighter in color and lack the hearty texture of 'whole' grain foods. Most refined grain foods are fortified to add back some of the nutrients lost during processing. However, studies show

that eating whole grains instead of refined grains has many advantages.

How do whole grains improve health?

Replacing refined grains with whole grains in your diet can help improve your health. Eating more whole grains reduces your risk of many diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Also studies show that eating more whole grains can help many of us lose weight. That's because foods made with whole grains are more satisfying. They are higher in fiber, and fiber plays a major role in helping us to feel full. As a result, eating more whole grains helps you feel less hungry, making it easier to eat less and manage your weight.

Experts are still learning about all the benefits — however it is very clear that eating foods made from whole grains is a great step to improve your health.

How can I tell if a food is whole grain?

Information on packages can be confusing. Words such as 'enriched', 'multi-grain', and '100% wheat' sound good, but do not mean 'whole grain'. Many products made with fortified refined grains can use these descriptions — even if they don't contain any whole grains. Labels and health claims on packages can help you determine which foods really do contain whole grain.

Ingredient Statements and Labels

Ingredient statements on food packages are one key to identifying products that are truly whole grain. Look for the words 'whole' before the name of the grain; for example whole wheat, whole oats or whole rye. The whole grain should be one of the first ingredients or main ingredient



Our dietitians receive hundreds of questions each year about a wide variety of nutrition topics. Their timely and trustworthy insights and ideas can help you and your family live healthier lives.

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listed. Also, claims on the front labels of many packages can help you to find whole grain foods. Look for '100% whole grain' or '100% whole wheat'.

Symbols

Symbols on packages are another way to identify many whole grain products. For example, manufacturers who are members of the Whole Grain Council place the whole grain stamp on products that contain at least 8 grams (1/2 a serving) of whole grain ingredients. The stamp displays the number of grams of whole grain per serving in the product.

Health Claims

Health claims can also be a guide to finding whole grains. The Food & Drug Administration has approved the following health claim for use on packages of products that contain 51% whole grain by weight: "Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers."

Which foods contain whole grains?

Whole grain foods range from everyday to exotic. Many breads, pastas and ready to eat cereals are whole grains. Some common whole grains include oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, cornmeal, and whole wheat bread. Not as common but fairly well known examples of whole grains are bulgur which is the main ingredient

in Tabbouleh salad and buckwheat in Japanese soba noodles. Some lesser known, more exotic whole grains include quinoa, wheat berries, millet, amaranth and spelt.

What's the right amount of whole grains?

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that a minimum of half the grains you eat be whole grains. For example if you eat about 2,000 calories per day, you should have a total of six servings of grains; a minimum of three servings should be whole grains. What does a serving of whole grains look like? One serving is about 1/2 cup of cooked brown rice, oatmeal or whole wheat pasta or a slice of whole wheat bread.

How can I eat more whole grains?

There are many quick and easy ways to boost the amount of whole grains you eat. Many whole grain foods are widely available in super markets as well as restaurants.

- Substitute whole-wheat bread for white
- Try oatmeal or whole grain breakfast cereals
- Choose brown rice instead of white
- Try whole-wheat pasta
- Snack on air popped popcorn

Along with fruits, vegetables, low fat dairy and lean proteins, make whole grains a part of your healthy meal plan today and every day.



Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.