

## It's about health and wellness: Get grains into your breakfast each morning

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September is National Better Breakfast and Whole Grains Month, and breakfast is the perfect opportunity to incorporate whole grains into one's daily meal plan.

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, people should strive to get 50% of their daily grain intake through whole grains. For most adults, this means five to six ounces of grains a day. For example, a slice of bread, a cup of cereal or a half-cup of pasta or rice counts as a 1-ounce equivalent, or portion of grains. To make half of the daily intake whole grains, the sources of these amounts would come from whole-grain bread, whole-grain pasta or whole-grain cereal (i.e., oatmeal). Thus, three slices of whole-grain bread (3 ounces) would not only count for half of a person's daily grain intake, but also their 50% recommendation of whole-grain intake.

A whole grain, such as a kernel of wheat, has all the parts of the grain — the bran (the outer part of the grain), the endosperm (the next layer of the grain, after the bran, essentially most of the grain) and the germ (the very inside, or smallest portion of the grain). Refined grains eliminate the bran and germ, which contains most of the fiber and nutrients of the grain.

According to the Whole Grain Council, the definition of a whole grain is 100% of the original kernel containing the bran, germ and endosperm. If the kernel has been processed (i.e., cracked, crushed, rolled, etc.), the end food product should deliver the same balance of nutrients as are found in the original grain seed.

Examples of whole grains include brown rice, rye, oats, wheat and farro. Some lesser-known grains include kamut (a type of wheat), teff, millet and buckwheat. Many grains, such as oats, rice and wheat can be eaten for breakfast in the form of hot or cold cereals. Other examples of whole grains include wild rice (rice is part of the grass family), corn and barley.

Whole grains are high in fiber, which aids in digestion, and contains complex carbohydrates which the body uses for energy. Grains also provide B vitamins, trace minerals such as iron and zinc, and are a source of protein. High fiber does not always mean whole grain. Studies have shown that whole grains are also high in antioxidants.

Some people are not able to process the protein in certain grains. This protein is called gluten. The term for this inability to process gluten is called celiac disease and people with celiac disease must avoid foods containing gluten. Celiac disease, according to the Celiac Disease Foundation, is an autoimmune disease that causes inflammation and, over time, damage to the small intestine. Celiac disease is not curable, and the treatment is to avoid products containing gluten.

Not all grains contain gluten. Some grains such as rice, sorghum, millet and corn do not contain gluten. People with celiac disease may be able to eat these grains. Oats are also a possibility, along with other gluten free grains, if they are processed in a certified gluten free facility. People with celiac disease should always check with their care provider or a dietician if they are concerned, or have questions, about which grains are right for them.

When looking for whole grain products it is important to look at the list of ingredients. The words "whole grain" should be listed first in the ingredient label, or the package should say, "made from 100% whole grains." A loaf of bread might say, "stone ground" or "organic." These words may sound healthy, but do not mean the product necessarily is healthy or meets the whole grain requirement. The words on the label should be, "whole grain" (made from whole grain-corn, whole wheat, etc.).

Also, just because the bread is brown does not mean it is made from whole wheat; manufacturers sometimes use molasses or caramel coloring to color the bread brown to fool consumers into thinking they are buying 100% whole-wheat bread when they are not.

However, a bread can be white, or light colored, and still be made from whole wheat. According to the Mayo Clinic website, white-whole wheat bread is made from whole-grain wheat. It is just made from a different type of wheat than other wheat breads. It is made from white wheat which lacks the color found in bran, is milder in flavor and has a softer texture. Regular white-flour bread is made with refined grains. Refined grains have been stripped of the bran and germ parts of the grain which contain the fiber and nutrients of the grain. The package won't say whole grain.

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Incorporating whole-grain foods into your daily diet can be simple, easy and tasty. If you are new to whole grains, try mixing white rice with brown rice until you get used to the nutty taste of brown rice. Snack on air-popped popcorn. Mix whole-wheat pasta with regular pasta (the whole-wheat pasta lightens as it cools). Experiment with using whole-wheat flour in your muffin and cookie recipes in place of all or part of regular white flour. If you are not able to use regular wheat flour, gluten-free flour can be used for many baking recipes (i.e., muffins and cornbread).

The world of whole grains is wide and full of interesting and exciting possibilities for incorporating whole grains into your diet and that of your family. Start today and see where the road to whole grain usage takes you. For more information and recipes using whole grains, go to [www.foodhero.org](http://www.foodhero.org).

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