

Grains

Grains, also known as starches, include foods made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, or other cereal grains. They make up foods such as bread, pasta, rice, cereal, and tortillas. **Whole grains, such as whole wheat, are the best choice. Each day, at least half of the grains we eat should be whole grains.**



Whole grain means it is the “complete” grain. The health benefits of whole grain come from three parts of the grain – the bran (the fibrous coating around the grain), the germ (the nutrient-rich inner part), and the endosperm (the soft white, starchy inside portion).



Refined grains have been milled and are usually “white” grains. Milling not only removes most of the fiber, but also removes up to 25% of the grain’s protein and many essential nutrients. Most refined grains are “enriched,” which means certain vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid) and iron are replaced after milling. Fiber is not replaced in enriched grains.



Aim for 3 servings (48 grams) of whole grain foods each day.

Food Item	1 Serving =
Whole grain cereals	1 cup dry ready-to-eat or ½ cup cooked
Whole grain breads	1 slice bread or small roll or ½ bagel, ½ English muffin or ½ hamburger bun
Rice (brown) or whole grain pasta	½ cup cooked
Other foods made with whole grain flour	1 pancake (5-inch diameter) or 1 small waffle or 1 very small muffin (1 oz.) or 3-4 small crackers or 1 tortilla (6-inch diameter)



Tips for Eating Healthy Grains:

- When choosing a whole grain food, look for the word “**whole**” in the **ingredient list**. The word “whole” should come in front of the grain ingredient such as “whole wheat” or “whole oats,” and it should appear at or near the top (beginning) of the list. Whole grains may also be listed as follows: brown rice, whole grain white rice, quinoa, buckwheat, popcorn, whole oatmeal, whole rye, bulgur (cracked wheat), and sorghum.



WHOLE – Choose more of these.	REFINED – Choose less of these.
Whole wheat flour	“Enriched” flour (used in breads, pasta, crackers, baked goods), wheat germ, wheat bran
100% whole wheat or 100% whole grain or whole rye bread	White bread made with “enriched” wheat flour (cracked wheat, stoned wheat, wheat berry, 100% wheat, seven grain, multigrain – All are made from mostly refined grains, not whole grains; always check the label)
Brown rice (including instant); wild rice	White rice
100% whole grain or whole rye crackers	Crackers made with “enriched” wheat flour
Popcorn	Pretzels
Whole wheat pasta	“Enriched” wheat or semolina pasta
Whole cornmeal	Corn flakes, de-germinated cornmeal
Oats (whole, steel-cut, rolled, quick, instant)	Oat grits, oat bran

- Keep in mind that whole grains vary in dietary fiber content. Just because it is a whole grain **does not** make it high in fiber. The term fiber refers to carbohydrates that **cannot** be digested. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes.



- Sometimes, a distinction is made between soluble fiber and insoluble fiber:
 - **Soluble fiber** partially dissolves in water and has been shown to lower cholesterol.
 - **Insoluble fiber** does not dissolve in water. That's why it helps with constipation.

It's important to include both kinds of fiber as part of a healthy diet.

- **Regularly eating whole grains with fiber provides significant health benefits:**
 - A diet that includes foods that are rich in fiber can help lower cholesterol and prevent diabetes and heart disease. When carbohydrates are combined with fiber, it slows the absorption of sugar. And, foods with fiber make us feel full, which discourages overeating. Good sources of fiber contain 10-19% of the Daily Value; excellent sources contain 20% or more. Finally, fiber itself has no calories, and adequate amounts of fiber help move food through the digestive system, promoting healthy bowel function and protecting against constipation.

See the “Carbohydrates” MOVE!® Handout for additional information.

