Eat More Whole Grains

Before you eat, think about what goes on your plate or in your cup or bowl. Foods like whole grains, vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy products and lean protein foods contain the nutrients you need without too many calories.

Make At Least Half Your Grains Whole: The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend different amounts of calories and foods according to age and activity level. Overall, the Guidelines recommend that all Americans make half or more of their grains whole grains. For everyone age 9 and up, this means eating 3 to 5 servings or more of whole grains every day. However, the Dietary Guidelines call the amounts “ounce-equivalents” rather than servings of grain. An ounce-equivalent is:

- 1 one-ounce slice of bread
- 1 ounce uncooked pasta or rice
- ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal
- 1 tortilla (6" diameter)
- 1 pancake (5" diameter)
- 1 ounce ready-to-eat cereal (about 1 cup cereal flakes)

For more information, go to ChooseMyPlate.gov.

Reasons to Eat Whole Grains: Whole grains are important sources of nutrients like iron, magnesium, B vitamins and fiber. People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Whole grains help reduce the risk of bowel disorders, some cancers, heart disease (by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol), stroke and type 2 diabetes.

Whole Versus Refined Grains: Grains are divided into whole grains, which contain the entire grain kernel, and refined grains, which are milled to remove part of the grain. Refined grains usually are enriched by adding back certain B vitamins and iron after processing, although fiber is not added back to most enriched grains. White flour, white bread, white rice, and degermed cornmeal are examples of refined grains.

Whole Grain Clues on the Food Label: Choose products that are labeled “100 percent whole grains” and name a whole-grain ingredient first on the list (Note: Ingredients are listed in descending order of weight, from most to least).

- whole oats
- whole rye
- whole wheat
- whole-grain barley
- brown rice
- wild rice
- whole-grain white rice
- oatmeal
- bulgur
- whole-grain corn
• whole-grain cornmeal
• graham flour
• quinoa
• buckwheat
• triticale
• millet
• sorghum

Make sure that the bread you buy is whole grain and not just brown in color due to adding molasses or other ingredients. Find healthy choices fast by choosing products that have the whole grain stamp.

If these words are listed as the first ingredient, the item is NOT a whole grain product.

• wheat flour
• enriched
• multigrain
• 100% wheat
• stone ground
• cracked wheat
• seven-grain
• bran

Although bran provides fiber, products containing bran are not necessarily whole grain products.

**Simple Changes to Add More Whole Grains to Meals and Snacks:**

• Start the day with hot breakfast cereal (e.g. oatmeal) with warm milk, chopped fresh seasonal fruits, and flavorings like cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla and maple extract.
• Eat 100% whole-wheat bread or bagels instead of white bread or bagels.
• Snack on popcorn, which is a whole grain. Make it low-fat popcorn with little or no added salt or butter.
• Serve 100% whole-wheat or rye crackers at a party.
• Choose brown rice instead of white rice, unless it is whole-grain white rice.
• Prepare macaroni and cheese with whole-wheat macaroni.
• Use whole grains in mixed dishes. Add barley to vegetable soup or stew, and put bulgur wheat in casseroles. Create a side dish pilaf by sautéing vegetables in a small amount of olive oil and adding cooked whole grains. Marinate cooked grains with salad dressings and sprinkle or toss into main course salads.
• Make your own trail mix. Combine whole-grain cereals with your favorite unsalted nuts and seeds (e.g. peanuts, cashews, walnuts and sunflower seeds) and dried fruits (e.g. apples, raisins, pineapple, cherries and apricots).
• Substitute whole-wheat flour for up to half the white flour in pancake, waffle, muffin, cookie or other flour-based recipes.

**Whole Grains Can Fit Into a Gluten-Free Diet:** If you can’t eat wheat gluten, you can still eat certain whole grain products, such as certified gluten-free oats or oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, quinoa and buckwheat.
This information is supplied with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service is implied. All recommendations are for South Carolina conditions and may not apply to other areas. Use pesticides only according to the directions on the label. All recommendations for pesticide use are for South Carolina only and were legal at the time of publication, but the status of registration and use patterns are subject to change by action of state and federal regulatory agencies. Follow all directions, precautions and restrictions that are listed.