

The Nutritional Value of Whole Grains

Let's Hear it for Whole Grains!

There's a **WHOLE** lot to love about whole grains. This power food is loaded with fiber, healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, and other beneficial nutrients. When you eat grains that are relatively unprocessed, as is the case with whole grains, your risk for conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke is reduced. The fiber in whole grains also helps with maintaining a healthy body weight.

It is important to remember that not all grains are created equal. Unfortunately, many grocery items now come loaded with additives, fillers, sugars, and unhealthy oils that are used to increase the shelf life and flavor of food. Although these added ingredients may be beneficial to the sellers, they can be detrimental to our health, making it all the more important to be a conscious consumer and healthy eater.

"Made with Whole Grains?"

The amount of grains you need to eat depends on your age, sex, and level of physical activity, but you should aim for eating 3 to 5 servings or more of whole grains every day. One serving of whole grains is equal to a slice of 100% whole wheat bread and contains about 16 grams of whole grains. Shopping for something as simple as bread can be an overwhelming task when you are surrounded by confusing labels like "made with whole grains." The problem with this phrase is that it is misleading; the product could contain 2% whole grains or 85% whole grains, but the most important point to note is that the product is not 100% whole grain.



Don't Fall for the Ads!



The marketing line on the front of a food product may say something like "contains 5 grams of whole grain." Good information, but again misleading for most consumers. Think about it like this: You can eat one slice of whole wheat bread for about 100 calories and get one serving of whole grains. Alternatively, you can eat 27 Cheez-It crackers which contain 150 calories and 5 grams of whole grains, or about a third of a serving. You would have to eat three servings of Cheez-Its to get the equivalent of one serving of whole grains. It might be tempting, but is it really worth 450 unhealthy calories? We didn't think so...

What to Look for on Food Labels

The best strategy for selecting the most healthful products is to read the nutrition and ingredient labels. Make sure to follow these basic rules when shopping for whole grains:

1. The very first ingredient should be a WHOLE GRAIN. Look for the words whole wheat, wheat berries, stoneground whole, or whole grain, plus the name of the grain, such as brown rice or oats. These are the most common ingredients you will see listed, but there are many other whole grains available.

2. Be adventurous by eating foods containing these whole grains:

- Whole wheat bulgur, whole wheat couscous, and other strains of wheat like kamut and spelt
- Oat groats, steel-cut or rolled oats (gluten-free but often contaminated by wheat during the growing process), hulled barley, rye
- Gluten-free options: millet, teff, amaranth, quinoa, corn and whole cornmeal, brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat

3. Limit products that contain the following non-whole grain ingredients which are often found in processed foods:

- Enriched, bleached, white or wheat flour
- White rice
- Multigrain
- Degerm



Shop Smart

You should also avoid these when looking at the ingredients in anything whole grain or non-whole grain:

- Partially hydrogenated oils / hydrogenated oils: they lower good cholesterol (HDL) and increase bad cholesterol (LDL)
- High fructose corn syrup and other added sugars: It is best to limit added sugar intake to 25 grams or less per day. That is less than 1 can of coke.

Be an informed consumer. Check your protein bars, crackers, cereal, “healthy” desserts, breads and anything else that’s being advertised as a healthy grain option. Remember, an occasional splurge won’t have a negative impact, but choose whole grains as often as possible.

Did you know? Finely ground grain (i.e. processed grain) is more rapidly digested and therefore has a greater impact on blood sugar than grain that is more

Sources:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/health-gains-from-whole-grains/>
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/whole-grains/NU00204/NSECTIONGROUP=2>
<http://www.fitsugar.com/5-Ingredients-Avoid-870962>

Your Ultimate Guide to Whole Grains!

Follow this handy cooking guide to become a whole grains expert in no time!

1 cup of dry grain:	Water or broth:	Bring to a boil, then simmer for:	Amount after cooking:
Amaranth	6 cups	15-20 minutes	2 1/2 cups
Barley, hulled	3 cups	45-60 minutes	3 1/2 cups
Buckwheat	2 cups	20 minutes	4 cups
Bulgur	2 cups	10-12 minutes	3 cups
Cornmeal (polenta)	4 cups	25-30 minutes	2 1/2 cups
Millet (hulled)	2 1/2 cups	25-35 minutes	4 cups
Oats (steel cut)	4 cups	30 minutes	3 cups
Pasta (whole wheat)	6 cups	8-12 minutes (varies)	varies
Quinoa	2 cups	12-15 minutes	3+ cups
Brown Rice	2 1/2 cups	25-45 minutes (varies)	3-4 cups
Rye	4 cups	soak overnight then cook 45-60 minutes	3 cups
Sorghum	4 cups	25-40 minutes	3 cups
Spelt berries	4 cups	soak overnight then cook 45-60 minutes	3 cups
Wheat berries	4 cups	soak overnight then cook 45-60 minutes	3 cups
Wild rice	3 cups	45-55 minutes	3 1/2 cups

Rainbow Quinoa Salad

Ingredients (serves 4-6)

1 cup dry quinoa, rinsed
2 cups water
1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 avocado, chopped into chunks
Handful of cherry tomatoes, halved
1/2 red onion, diced
1 small clove garlic, minced
1 red and yellow bell pepper, chopped into chunks
Small handful cilantro, chopped
1 lime, juiced
1/2 tsp cumin
1/2 tbsp olive oil
Salt, to taste

Directions

Cook quinoa according to the instructions above.

While the quinoa is cooking, prepare all other ingredients. Prepare the dressing by whisking together the lime juice, oil, cumin, and salt.

When the quinoa has finished cooking, remove it from heat and fluff with a fork. Add black beans and toss to warm them.