FOOD Rx

FOOD MEDICINE
Every Bite Matters

WHOLE GRAINS

Whole grains contain all the essential parts of the entire grain seeds in their original form.

- The edible parts – the bran, the germ and endosperm – include the nutrients that nourish our bodies.
- These are also the edible parts that are removed when grains are processed for shelf stability and for finer texture (whole wheat vs. white wheat).
- While refined grains are required to have vitamins and minerals synthetically added back in, the whole grain varieties are much more nourishing for our bodies.

IDENTIFYING WHOLE GRAINS

Whole grains are a staple around the globe, providing nourishing benefits to people worldwide. There are 21 identified whole grains. You may know some, while others may be new to you.

See how many you recognize at www.wholegrainscouncil.org.

Research shows that in the past 10 years, the number of whole grain products has increased by over 2000%. With so many products, it is easy to consume whole grains.

- The word "whole" should be in front of each grain listed on the ingredient list. Familiarize yourself with the 21 whole grains available for easy identification.
- Synthetic nutrients are easily identifiable because they are listed underneath the ingredient list. They list the various B-vitamins that have been stripped and added back in: thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, etc. A whole grain already contains these nutrients so they wouldn't be listed.
- Quality whole grain products generally have few ingredients – some even just one. For example, oats to make oatmeal have just one ingredient: Oats. While wholesome crackers, like Triscuits, have three: whole wheat, salt, oil.
- Always look for added sugars in the ingredient list and on the label. Too much added sugar reduces the healthful benefits of the whole grain product.
- By law, a whole grain product only has to be 51% percent whole grain to be labeled as such. By looking for the list of synthetic nutrients under the ingredient list and/or looking for the word "whole" in front of every grain included in the ingredient list is important.
- It is OK to eat your favorite refined grain products, but ensuring half your grain intake is whole grains will be the most beneficial to your body.

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WHOLE GRAINS

HEALTH BENEFITS OF WHOLE GRAINS

1 Lowers bad cholesterol

- The dietary fiber in whole grains helps reduce bad cholesterol by attaching to it and moving it out of the body during defecation.
- The vitamins and minerals can also help reduce inflammation, which helps reduce heart disease risk.

2 Controls blood sugar

- The nutrients that are found in whole grains (and those not removed by processing for shelf stability), including dietary fiber, slow the digestion and absorption of food.
- This provides the normal breakdown of blood sugar leading to controlled levels.

3 Reduces Constipation

- Whole grains contain numerous vitamins and minerals, including dietary fiber, that help to nourish our guts.
- The fiber increases the weight and size of stool and softens it to make it easier to pass.

4 Aids in weight loss

- All wholesome foods, including whole grains, give your body the medicine it needs to satisfy both your biology and your hunger.
- Whole grains serve to supply quality energy that help you feel more full and reduce your cravings.

MAKING THE SWITCH

Switching from refined grains (where the nutrition has been stripped during processing and then added back synthetically) to whole grains can be simple!

- Choose 100% whole grain pasta or 100% whole grain bread for pasta dishes and sandwiches.
- Choose brown rice over white rice – or choose from the 21 whole grain varieties you can buy in bulk. You can make ahead from scratch and add to soups, salads, etc. Many recipes located at www.wholegrainscouncil.org.
- Corn tortillas and homemade popcorn are both whole grains and make great snacks!
- 100% whole grain crackers are easy to find. The simpler and fewer ingredients, the better.
- Look for the word "whole" in front of the grain on a label. This indicates it is not refined.

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