

Smart Choices

Nutrition News

Prepared By: Cathy Agan, Extension Agent (FNP)
 Terri Crawford, Extension Agent (Nutrition)

Inside the Pyramid—Grains

Grains, especially whole grains, provide many health benefits. People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Grains also provide many nutrients that our bodies need for health and maintenance. Check out these health benefits:

- Eating foods that are high in fiber, like whole grains, reduces the risk of heart disease.
- Eating foods high in fiber, such as whole grains, may reduce constipation.
- Eating at least 3 ounce equivalents a day of whole grains may help with weight management.
- Eating grains fortified with folate before and during pregnancy helps prevent certain birth defects.

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product. Some common examples of grain foods include: bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas and grits.

Grains are divided into two

groups—whole grains and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel: the bran, germ and endosperm. Whole-wheat flour, oatmeal, whole cornmeal and brown rice are all whole grain foods. Refined grains have been milled to



remove the bran and germ. This gives grains a finer texture and improves their shelf life. However, it removes dietary fiber, iron and many B vitamins.

White flour, degermed cornmeal, white bread and white rice are examples of refined grains.

Most refined grains are enriched. This means that certain B vitamins and iron are added back after processing. Fiber is not added back to enriched grains though.

What Counts as an Ounce of Grains?

- ◆ 1 regular slice of bread
- ◆ 1 cup of ready-to eat cereal
- ◆ 1/2 cup of cooked rice, pasta or cereal
- ◆ 1 mini bagel
- ◆ 1 small biscuit
- ◆ 1 small piece of cornbread
- ◆ 5 whole wheat crackers
- ◆ 1/2 English muffin
- ◆ 1 small muffin
- ◆ 1 pancake (4 1/2" diameter)
- ◆ 3 cups popped popcorn
- ◆ 1—6" flour or corn tortilla

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Tips to Help You Eat Whole Grains . . .



- * Substitute whole grain products for refined products—such as eating whole wheat bread instead of white bread or brown rice rather than white rice.
- * Experiment by substituting whole wheat or oat flour for up to half of the white flour in pancake, waffle or muffin recipes.
- * Use whole-grain bread or cracker crumbs in meatloaf.
- * Try rolled oats or crushed, unsweetened whole grain cereal as a breading for baked chicken or fish.
- * Snack on ready-to-eat whole grain cereals.
- * Try a whole-grain snack chip like baked tortilla chips.
- * Popcorn (a whole grain) can be a healthy snack with little or no added salt and butter.

Oat Snack Cakes

- 1 cup raw oatmeal
- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 cup all purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3/4 cup softened margarine
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla flavoring
- 2 beaten egg whites
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 cup raisins



Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix together oatmeal, flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and cinnamon in a large bowl. Cut in margarine until mixture resembles coarse meal. Combine oil, vanilla, egg whites and water. Stir into dry ingredients and add raisins, mixing only until it holds together. Wash hands thoroughly, then dip in cornmeal or flour. Pinch off pieces of dough and form into balls about 1 inch in diameter. Place balls on baking pan which has been sprayed with non-stick cooking spray, and press out slightly to about 1/4 inch thickness. Bake 15—20 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool, then store in an airtight container.

What to Look for on the Food Label:

Choose foods that name one of the following whole-grain ingredients first on the label's ingredient list:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Brown rice | Whole oats |
| Bulgur | Whole rye |
| Graham flour | Whole wheat |
| Oatmeal | Wild rice |
| Whole-grain corn | |

Foods labeled with the words “multi-grain”, “stone-ground”, “100% wheat”, “cracked wheat”, “seven grain” or “bran” are usually not whole-grain products.

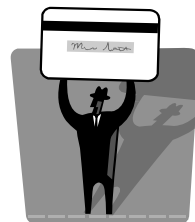


Color is not an indication of a whole grain. Bread can be brown because of molasses or other added ingredients. Always check the ingredient list to see if it is a whole grain.

What's the Purpose of SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) isn't about welfare. Its goal is helping people with limited incomes improve their nutrition for better health and disease prevention. The program is available to all eligible persons.

Food stamp coupons have been replaced by an electronic card that looks and works just like a typical debit or credit card used by any grocery shopper. No one but you and the grocery check-out clerk will know you are using SNAP. This program can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact 1-888-LAHELPU or visit www.dss.state.la.us.



Provided by LSU AgCenter Community Nutrition Programs

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