

Get on the Grain Train



How many boxes did you check? You have many choices when it comes to eating whole grains. Vary your choices from day to day and get the amount that is right for you. Find out how much you need daily and learn more about whole grains inside.

MyPyramid: Putting the Guidelines Into Practice

Revised
March 2008

Center for
Nutrition Policy
and Promotion
United States
Department of
Agriculture

Home and Garden
Bulletin No. 267-2

“What ARE whole grains, anyway?”

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, corn, or another cereal is a grain product. Bread, pasta, oatmeal, cornflakes, and grits are all grain products. “Whole grains” are grain products that contain the entire grain kernel. (See the whole-grain kernel graphic.) Check the “Whole Grains You Eat” section to see how many different whole-grain products you have tried.

Whole and refined grains—What’s the difference?

There are two main types of grain products: whole and refined.

Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel—the bran, germ, and endosperm. Examples include whole-wheat flour, bulgur, oatmeal, whole cornmeal, and brown rice.

Refined grains have been milled—the bran and germ are removed. This process also removes much of the B vitamins, iron,

Whole Grains You Eat—Have you tried whole-grain versions of these foods?

Many whole-grain products are labeled “100% whole wheat” or “whole grain,” or have “whole” before the first ingredient. Check the foods you have tried that are made from whole grain.

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bagels | <input type="checkbox"/> Crackers | <input type="checkbox"/> Pancakes and waffles | <input type="checkbox"/> Spaghetti, macaroni, and other pasta |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barley | <input type="checkbox"/> English muffins | <input type="checkbox"/> Pita bread | <input type="checkbox"/> Wild rice* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bread | <input type="checkbox"/> Graham crackers | <input type="checkbox"/> Popcorn* | <input type="checkbox"/> Tortillas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ready-to-eat cereal | <input type="checkbox"/> Rye crispbread* | <input type="checkbox"/> Pretzels | <input type="checkbox"/> Tortilla and corn chips |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulgur* | <input type="checkbox"/> Muffins | <input type="checkbox"/> Brown rice* | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quinoa* | <input type="checkbox"/> Noodles | <input type="checkbox"/> Rolls and buns | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couscous | <input type="checkbox"/> Oatmeal* | | |

*These products are always whole grains.

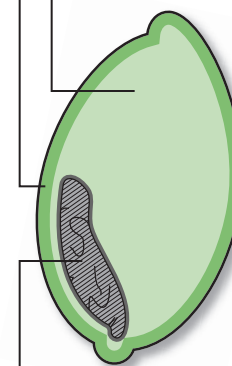
Whole-grain kernel

Bran

“Outer shell” protects seed
Fiber, B vitamins, trace minerals

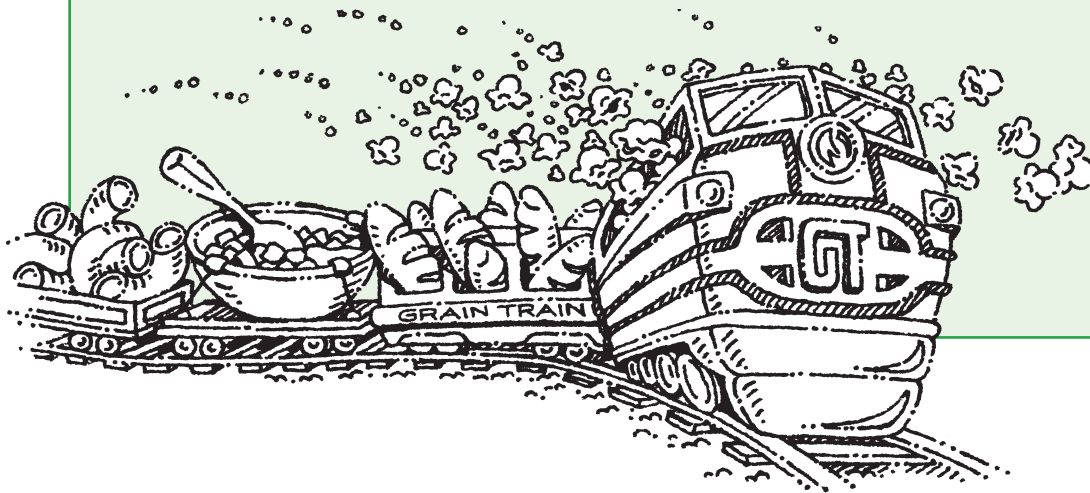
Endosperm

Provides energy
Carbohydrates, protein



Germ

Nourishment for the seed
Antioxidants, vitamin E, B-vitamins



Especially for women

Women who are or who could become pregnant should eat foods fortified with folic acid or take a folic acid supplement—in addition to consuming folate-rich foods—to reduce risk of some serious birth defects. Folic acid is added to enriched grains. A few whole-grain foods, such as ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, are fortified with folic acid as well. Read the ingredient list to find out if folic acid and other nutrients have been added. A healthcare provider can help you choose foods or a supplement to ensure that you get enough.

and dietary fiber. Some examples of refined grains are wheat flour, enriched bread, and white rice. Most refined grains are *enriched*. This means certain B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid) and iron are added back after processing. Fiber is not added back to enriched grains.

What's so great about whole grains?

Eating whole grains provides health benefits. People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet may have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Whole grains are great because:

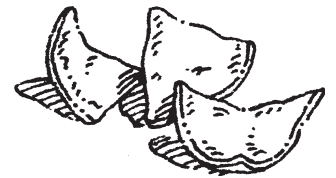
- Diets rich in food containing fiber, such as most whole grains and many fruits and vegetables, can:
 - Help reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.
 - Promote proper bowel function.
- Eating at least 3 ounce-equivalents a day of whole grains may:
 - Reduce the risk for several chronic diseases.
 - Help with weight maintenance.

Grains differ in their nutrient content, so it's important to choose a variety daily. While whole grains can be good sources of fiber, refined grains usually are not. Fiber is best obtained from foods rather than from fiber supplements. This is because foods provide many different types of fiber and other protective substances. Use the Nutrition Facts label on food packages to help you choose grains that are good sources of fiber.



How many grains do you need?

MyPyramid recommends a specific amount of grains an individual should eat each day. These are given in “ounce-equivalents,” which we refer to as “ounces” of grains. The number of ounces that are right for you depends on your age, gender, and calorie needs. Almost everyone should have at least 5 ounces of grains daily—at least half should be whole grains. People with high calorie needs, such as active teen boys and active men, need up to 10 ounces daily. Box 1 shows how many ounces you may need.



Box 1. How many ounces of grains do you need each day?

The recommended ounces per day in this table are for moderately active people. Active individuals may need more and inactive people may need less than the amounts listed below. Visit MyPyramid.gov to find the amount that is right for you.

Age	Total Ounces of Grains	
	Males	Females
2	3	3
3	5	4
4 - 8	5	5
9	6	5
10 - 11	6	6
12 - 13	7	6
14	8	6
15	9	6
16 - 18	10	6
19 - 25	10	7
26 - 45	9	6
46 - 65	8	6
66+	7	6

Remember —
at least half of the total grains listed here should be whole grains.

What counts as an ounce?

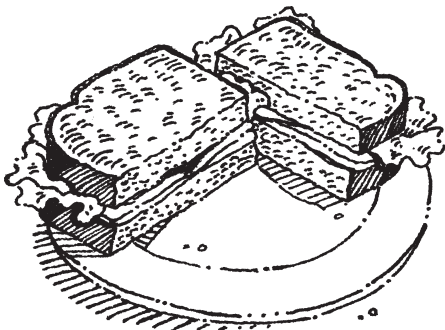
An ounce of grains is equal to one slice of bread, 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal (about 1 cup of flakes), or 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta. Check the portion sizes of the grain foods that you often eat. Box 2 lists examples of what counts as 1 ounce of grains.

You might be surprised at the amount of grains you eat each day—they add up quickly. For example, a whole bagel may be 3 to 4 ounces, and a portion of pasta (1 to 2 cups cooked) may be 2 to 4 ounces. The number of ounces you eat at one time does not matter, as long as the total for the day adds up to the amount that is right for you.

The sample grains in 1 day’s meals contains 6 ounces of grains. Remember, the number of ounces that are right for you may be more or less depending on your calorie needs. Notice that some grains in the sample are in bold print. These are whole grains.

Sample: Grains in 1 day’s meals
Grains shown fit into a 2,000-calorie meal plan.
Whole grains are in bold print.

Breakfast:	
1 ounce (1 cup) whole-wheat flakes	1
Lunch:	
Sandwich with 2 slices 100% whole-wheat bread	2
Afternoon snack:	
9 mini 3-ring pretzels	1
Dinner:	
1/2 cup white rice	1
Evening snack:	
3 cups popped popcorn	1
Total ounces of grains	6
Total ounces of whole grains	4



Box 2. What counts as 1 ounce of grains?

Whole-grain choices	Enriched choices
1 slice whole-grain bread (such as 100% whole-wheat bread)	1 slice white bread
1 ounce ready-to-eat, whole-grain cereal (about 1 cup wheat flakes)	1 small white roll
1/2 cup cooked whole-grain cereal, brown rice, or whole-wheat pasta	1 ounce ready-to-eat cereal (about 1 cup corn flakes)
5 whole-grain crackers	1/2 cup cooked cereal, white rice, or pasta
3 cups popped popcorn	9 mini 3-ring pretzels
	1 4 1/2 -inch pancake
	1 6-inch flour or corn tortilla

How do you know if a grain product is a whole grain?

Read the ingredient list on the food label. For many whole-grain products, the words “whole” or “whole grain” will appear before the grain’s name on the ingredient’s list. The whole grain should be the first ingredient listed. Wheat flour, enriched flour, and degerminated cornmeal are **not** whole grains. Box 3 lists some whole-grain ingredients. Another tip for finding whole grains is to look for the whole-grain health claim—“Diets rich in whole-grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may help reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers”—on food product labels. Foods that bear the whole-grain health claim must:



- Contain 51 percent or more whole grains by weight.
- Be low in fat, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol.

Box 3. To increase your intake of whole grains

Choose foods that name one of the following ingredients first on the label’s ingredient list. These are all whole grains:

brown rice	oatmeal	whole-grain corn	whole wheat
whole-wheat bulgur	whole barley	whole oats	wild rice
graham flour	popcorn	whole rye	

Try these tips for ways to include a variety of whole grains.

- Choose a whole-grain cereal for breakfast.
- Try a snack mix made from ready-to-eat, whole-grain cereals.
- Choose a whole-grain (whole-wheat or oatmeal) muffin.
- Try brown rice for stuffing baked green peppers or tomatoes.
- Try a whole-grain snack chip or cracker.
- For a change, try wild rice or whole-wheat pasta.
- Use whole grains in mixed dishes, such as whole-grain barley in vegetable soup and bulgur in casseroles or salads.

Did you know?

- Most grain products, including whole grains, are low in fat, *unless fat is added* in processing, in preparation, or at the table. For example, English muffins and bagels are low in fat, but cookies, pastries, and croissants tend to be rich in fat.
- Color is not an indication of whole grain. Bread can be brown because of molasses or other ingredients, not necessarily because it contains whole grains.
- Food products labeled with the words “multigrain,” “stone-ground,” “100% wheat,” “cracked wheat,” “seven-grain,” or “bran” are usually not whole-grain products.
- Some processed foods, such as rye or whole-wheat crackers and some ready-to-eat cereals (e.g., whole-wheat flakes and oat cereals), are whole grains.
- You can tell how much fiber is in a food by checking the Nutrition Facts label.

The Bottom Line

- Make smart choices from every food group, including grains.
- Make at least half of the grains you eat whole grains.
- Aim to get the amount of grains you need based on your calorie needs. Check Box 1 or MyPyramid.gov to see how many ounces are right for you.



Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans provides science-based advice to promote health and reduce risk for some chronic diseases through diet and physical activity. Your daily food and physical activity choices affect your health—how you feel today, tomorrow, and in the future. You may be eating plenty of food, but not eating the right foods that give your body the nutrients you need to be healthy. You may not be getting enough physical activity to stay fit and burn those extra calories. The Guidelines encourage Americans to:

- Make smart choices from every food group.
- Find your balance between food and physical activity.
- Get the most nutrition out of your calories.

To learn more about the Guidelines and to download these publications, visit USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion Web site at www.cnpp.usda.gov.

MyPyramid.gov

The MyPyramid Food Guidance System helps consumers follow the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It translates the Guidelines into messages that are easy to understand and food patterns that you can put into practice. To learn more about MyPyramid visit the MyPyramid.gov Web site.



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