



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Tulare County

Agriculture and Natural Resources



Prepared by: _____

WHY EAT WHOLE GRAINS?

The new U.S. Dietary guidelines have recently been released. The advice? Whole grain foods should be a bigger part of the American diet. One guideline states: **"Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains."** Yet, only 7% of Americans are getting the recommended three servings of whole grains each day.

Eating the recommended amount of whole grain every day doesn't have to be hard. It's easy as reaching for whole grain cereal, whole grain bread, or other delicious sources of whole grains.

What are whole grains? Unlike refined grains, whole grains include all of the parts: the bran, the endosperm and the germ.

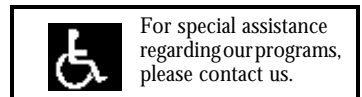
The bran is the "outer shell" of the grain that protects the seed. This is where the fiber is located, as well as B vitamins and trace minerals.

The endosperm is the middle white part of the grain. This is where carbohydrates are located. Carbohydrates provide energy. There is also some protein in the endosperm.

The germ is the small area in the grain that contains antioxidants, vitamins B and E, and fiber. The germ provides nourishment for the seed.

Contrary to popular perceptions, the benefits of whole grains go well beyond fiber and fiber's role in digestive health. Numerous studies have linked consumption of whole grains to reduce risk of heart disease,

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diabetes, and certain cancers. In fact, just last year, the Food and Drug Administration authorized this health claim for whole grains: "Diets rich in whole grain goods and other plant foods that are low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers."

Following are some recent research highlights:

Whole Grains and Heart Disease

- Research suggests that antioxidants contained in whole grains may work together with other compounds, including dietary fiber, to reduce overall risk for heart disease and heart disease mortality by 27% to 37%.
- Consuming whole grain products, specifically whole grain oats, may lower cholesterol levels—a significant risk factor for heart disease.

Whole Grains and Cancer

- Certain studies suggests that eating whole grains may reduce the risk for some types of cancers.
- Eating whole grain foods may lower the risk for gastrointestinal cancers by up to 43%.

Whole Grains and Diabetes

- Whole grains appear to help carbohydrate metabolism and improve glycemic control when eaten by people with diabetes.
- Recent studies found that eating whole grain foods may reduce the risk for developing type 2 diabetes by 21% to 27%.

When shopping for whole grains look for the words that indicate that whole grains were used in the product. For example, look for "100% Whole Wheat" or any other grain like oats, rice, barley, bulgar, or corn. Don't be fooled by products that are brown in color but do not contain whole grains. In some cases caramel coloring is used along with a mixture of whole grain and refined grains. Read the label. The ingredient list can tell you whether or not the product is what you are looking for.

Source: "Do You Have the Whole Grain Story?" General Mills Educational Resource Kit. 2001.

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