

Getting More Whole Grains in Your Diet

Kathryn S. Keim

Currently most Americans do NOT eat enough whole grain breads, cereals, or pasta. Because of this fact, most Americans do not get enough dietary fiber in their diet. Dietary fiber is the part of plants we can't digest and absorb. Most Americans consume about 12 to 17 grams of fiber a day and we should be eating almost twice that amount, or 20 to 30 grams each day.

You should increase your intake of whole grains, because plants are the only foods that have dietary fiber. They are also sources of starches, B vitamins, and iron.

I've been hearing that I should increase the amount of breads, cereals



and whole grains in my diet. Why?

Eating more whole grains and, thus, more fiber can affect your health in the following ways:

- Protect a person from becoming constipated.
- Help to lower blood cholesterol.
- Help in the management of *diabetes mellitus*.
- Help keep you and your digestive tract healthy.

For more information about how fiber affects your health, read *Fiber and You, Misc. Series 138*. You can get this at your county Cooperative Extension System office.

The Food Guide Pyramid developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) suggests you eat:

- six or more servings of different grain products each day; and
- three servings of the six a day being whole grain.

About the Author
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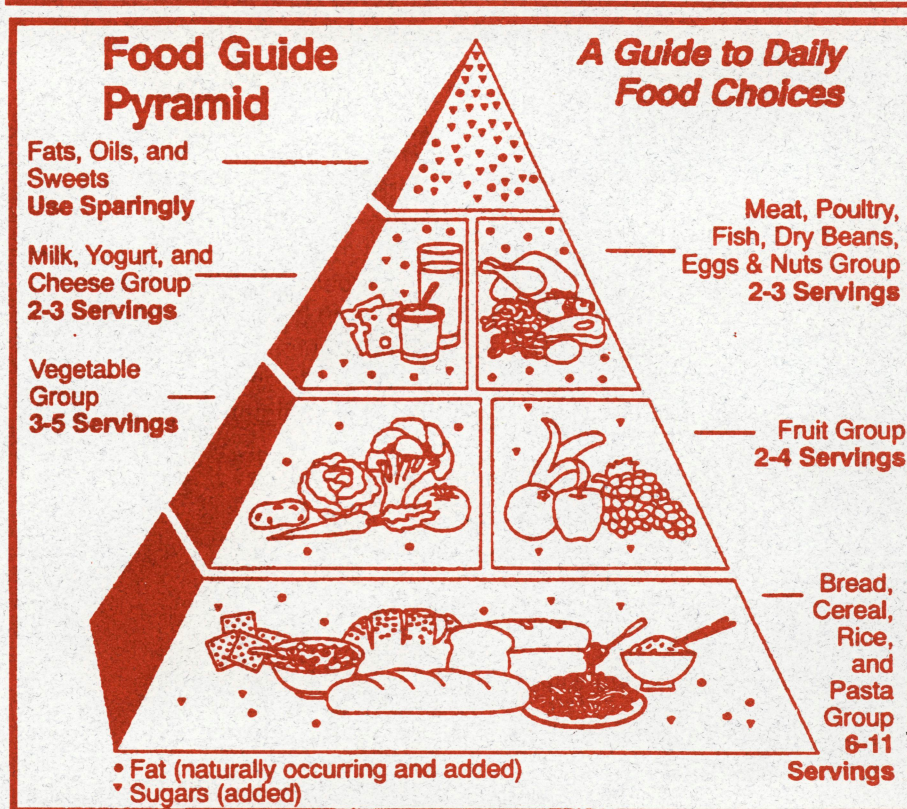
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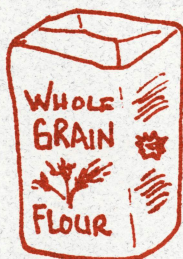
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All of these foods should be a part of your diet



Replace whole-grain flours for all-purpose flour in your favorite recipes.



Substituting half of all-purpose flour with whole-grain flour is a good starting point.

What do you mean when a food is "whole grain?"

A grain product is considered whole grain when the bran layer has not been removed. It is thus less processed and more like it was when harvested. Terms such as "whole grain" are used on the food label.

What foods are included in the grains group?

This group contains foods that are whole grain and more refined grain foods. Rice, macaroni, spaghetti, and other pastas are included in this food group. Breakfast cereals, bread, crackers, and pizza crusts are also examples of foods in this group.

What counts as a serving?

Bread	1 slice of bread
Cereal	1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal or about 1 cup
Rice and Pasta	1/2 cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta

What can I do to increase the amount of whole grain products in my diet?

Try these tips to add more whole grain products and fiber to your diet.

- Combine sliced roast beef, turkey, or chicken with salad greens for a main dish salad instead of a sandwich. Add whole grain bread or crackers to the meal.
- Try apple slices, low-fat cheese, and whole wheat crackers for a quick and delicious snack.
- Replace white bread with whole wheat bread.

- Add barley to soups and stews.
- Add cooked bulgur wheat to salads, casseroles, and stews.
- Try brown rice and whole-wheat pasta.
- Add bran or bran cereals to quick breads, yeast breads, pancakes, or meat loaf. Usually 2 Tbs to 1/2 cup is a good range to add.
- Replace whole-grain flours for all-purpose flour in your favorite recipes. Substituting half of the all-purpose flour with the whole-grain flour is a good starting point. Use the following substitution:

For 1 cup of enriched or all-purpose flour, use instead:

- 1 cup of whole-wheat flour, if finely milled;
- 7/8 cups of whole-wheat flour, if coarsely milled; or
- 3/4 cup of white flour and 1/4 cup of bran.

You may wish to try whole-grain flours like rye, buckwheat, and others.

How do I know how much fiber is in grain foods?

The nutrition facts label on packages is a good source of fiber amount information.

- Look for fiber information on the nutrition facts label of cereal boxes. Choose cereals with more fiber.
- Read food labels. A bread with the term “whole grain flour” as one of the first items on the ingredient list will have more fiber than one with wheat flour first. Some dark breads are brown because of caramel food coloring or molasses. Dark breads aren’t always high in fiber.

Even though each serving of a grain food does not have a lot of fiber, if you eat 6 to 11 servings from the grain group each day, you could consume anywhere from 12 to 30 grams of dietary fiber for the day.

Remember to check the label to find out how much fiber is in the grain product you are eating.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 Cup (50g)
Servings Per Container about 7

Amount Per Serving	Cereal with	
	1 Cup Cereal	1 Cup Vitamins A&D Skim Milk
Calories	180	270
Calories from Fat	15	15

% Daily Value*		
Total Fat 1.5g†	2%	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	0%
Polyunsaturated Fat 1g		
Monounsaturated Fat 0g		

Cholesterol 0mg	0%	1%
Sodium 0mg	0%	5%
Total Carbohydrate 41g	14%	18%

Dietary Fiber 6g	26%	26%
Sugars 0g		

Protein 5g

Vitamin A	**	10%
Vitamin C	**	4%
Calcium	2%	30%
Iron	8%	10%
Vitamin D	**	25%
Thiamine	6%	10%
Riboflavin	4%	20%
Niacin	15%	15%
Phosphorus	20%	45%
Magnesium	15%	20%

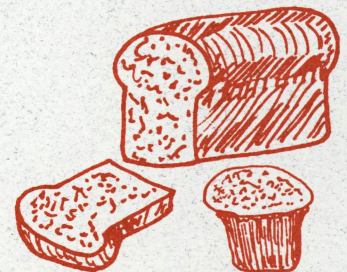
† Amount in 1 Cup Cereal. One cup skim milk contributes an additional 90 calories, 125mg sodium, 12g total carbohydrate (12g sugars), and 8g protein.

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

** Contains less than 2% of the daily value of these nutrients.

	Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

A bread with the term “whole grain flour” as one of the first items on the ingredient list will have more fiber than one with wheat flour first.



Some dark breads are brown because of caramel food coloring or molasses. Dark breads aren’t always high in fiber.

Below is a list of selected grain foods and the amount of total dietary fiber in a serving.

Grain foods	Serving size	Grams of total dietary fiber
Cornmeal	1/4 cup	2.5
Macaroni, cooked	1/2 cup	0.9
Noodles, egg, cooked	1/2 cup	0.9
Spaghetti, cooked	1/2 cup	1.2
Rice, white, cooked	1/2 cup	0.3
Rice, brown, cooked	1/2 cup	1.8
Whole grain wheat flour	1 cup	14.6
White wheat flour, all-purpose	1 cup	3.4
Oat bran, raw	1/3 cup	4.8
Wheat bran, crude	2 Tb.	3.0

Don't forget to increase the amount of water you drink.



If you increase your fiber intake you need to drink more than 8 glasses of water a day.

Warning

Increase the amount of vegetables, fruit, and whole-grains in your diet gradually. An increase in fiber should be done slowly. Add a new fiber containing food or increase the number of servings of a fiber food by one a week.

Don't forget to increase the amount of water you drink. Normally, you should be drinking a minimum of 8 glasses of water a day. Therefore, you need to drink more than 8 glasses if you increase your fiber intake.

Adding fiber to your diet is a wise dietary decision. It isn't difficult, but will require planning before you'll be in the habit of making fiber-rich food choices. The long term wellness benefits make the change a positive one.

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