

Total Nutrition

Getting Enough Whole Grains?

(NAPSA)—Living with a registered dietitian, my family gets plenty of whole grains. The only bread in the house is 100 percent whole wheat, we always have a couple of whole grain cereals on hand and brown rice is a favorite dinner grain. However, we are the exception—most Americans eat too few whole grains.



Mindy Hermann


The U.S. Surgeon General has set a goal for Americans to eat a minimum of three daily servings. Why? Whole-grain foods supply carbohydrates along with fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients (plant-based compounds that help promote health). Diets rich in whole grain foods can help keep your heart healthy, reduce the risk for some cancers and help you maintain a healthier body weight.

Nature has an interesting way of packaging foods. Whole foods, like whole grains or nuts or fruits and vegetables, each have a unique combination of compounds that together provide health benefits. The “whole” is greater than the sum of the parts; nutrients or phytonutrients by themselves do not have the same effect. Let’s look quickly at whole grains and heart disease prevention. The compounds in whole grains that may help decrease heart disease risk include a form of vitamin E, plant sterols, dietary fiber, resistant starch and oligosaccharides. Isn’t it easier to choose a whole food than to try to eat hundreds of different compounds individually?

Unfortunately, nine out of 10 Americans aren’t getting enough

True or False: The following terms are a clue that a food is whole grain:

Stone-ground
100 percent wheat
Cracked wheat
Bran

False: These terms don’t always describe whole-grain foods. You have to read the label more closely to make sure whole grains are in the ingredient list. 

whole grains. The easiest way to up the whole grains in your diet is to commit to having whole grains at two different meals or snacks. For example, at breakfast, switch to whole grain cereals such as Whole Grain Total, serve whole grain bread to toast lovers and top yogurt or fruit salad with crushed Whole Grain Total. I find that lunch is the easiest meal for whole grains. Choose whole grain bread or pita for a sandwich or fill your own wrap using a whole wheat tortilla. Another idea—substitute whole wheat flour for one-quarter of the regular flour in baked goods and then increase to one-third, suggests Len Marquart, Ph.D., R.D., a researcher at the University of Minnesota. You might even find that you prefer the satisfying, nutty flavor of whole grains. I do!

Ask Mindy

Q: What if I’m watching my carbs?

A: Cutting back on carbohydrates means making smart choices, not cutting out carbs completely. If you include three daily servings of whole grain foods, your carbohydrate intake still will be reasonable and you will benefit health-wise.