

Eating More Whole Grain—A Small Change With Big Benefits

New Food Guide Pyramid Dishes Up Three Servings Or More Of Whole Grain A Day

by Dr. Susan J. Crockett

(NAPSA)—The USDA gave whole grains a nod with the unveiling of the new food guide pyramid—in which whole grains play a prominent role. In fact, the USDA recommends that Americans get half of their daily serving of grain from whole grain. New research leaves little doubt that choosing more whole grain foods is an important factor in reducing risk of chronic disease—so why do Americans view adding whole grains to their diet as such a difficult feat?

As whole grains become more visible, they are also causing confusion among a public which, on average, eats only one serving of whole grain per day, not the three or more servings recommended by the USDA. In fact, nine out of 10 Americans don't get enough but it's surprisingly easy to dish up at least three servings of whole grain a day.

Whole Grain Foods Can Save Lives

Eating more whole grain foods may be one of the healthiest choices individuals can make to help cut their risk of both heart disease and some cancers. A number of large studies have shown that the risk of certain cancers is 20 percent to 50 percent lower in individuals who eat more whole grain. Another recent analysis of multiple studies showed that individuals who ate more whole grain foods cut their risk for heart disease by an average of 29 percent. The study also discovered that the soluble fiber from whole grain foods decreased cholesterol levels and even blood pressure.

Beyond heart disease and cancer, the number of individuals with type 2 diabetes is increasing rapidly and there is good emerging evidence that whole grain foods can help reduce diabetes risk. In a recent study of 160,000



people, eating more whole grain foods cut the risk of type 2 diabetes by up to 30 percent.

Managing weight can help prevent the onset of diabetes and, with Americans concerned about their expanding waistlines, eating more whole grains may become a new and healthy part of managing weight. In a 12-year study of more than 70,000 nurses, women who ate more whole grains weighed significantly less than did women who chose fewer whole grains. Eating more whole grains also was linked to gaining less weight over time.

Dishing Up Whole Grain Is Easy

Getting one serving of whole grain is as easy as pouring a bowl of cereal—all of General Mills' Big G cereals are now either a good source (8 grams) or excellent source (16 grams) of whole grain. Other easy whole grain sources include whole grain breads, whole-grain English muffins, popcorn, granola bars, whole grain crackers, whole grain pasta or brown rice, to name a few. One whole grain serving includes any food containing 16 grams of whole grain.

Two ways to tell if a food is whole grain is if the package or ingredient list has *either* of the following:

- A whole grain button or logo specifying that it is a good or

excellent source of whole grain OR

- Products that have a claim stating that diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers.

According to the FDA, in order to qualify for a whole grain health claim, a product must contain at least 51 percent whole grain. These products must also meet fat, saturated fat and cholesterol criteria.

High Fiber and Whole Grain Are Not the Same

High fiber does not mean whole grain and whole grain does not mean high fiber. In fact, many high fiber foods, such as bran cereals, do not provide whole grain. But fiber is just one of the many benefits of the "whole grain package." When it comes to reaping the health benefits of whole grains, the "whole" is truly greater than the sum of its parts. Whole grains include all three parts of the grain kernel, the fiber rich bran, the starchy endosperm and the nutrient-packed germ. Like fruits and vegetables, whole grains contain a powerful package of health-promoting substances including vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients and fiber. The evidence is convincing that eating more whole grain can help reduce the risk of serious conditions such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes and even help with weight management.

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