



An Aetna Company

Whole grains offer healthier gains

Washington Elementary School District



What are grain products?

Grain products are any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain. This includes bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas and grits.

What are the different kinds of grains?

There are two different kinds of grains: whole grains and refined grains.

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

Refined grains have been milled, a process that removes the bran and germ to give grains a finer texture and increase their shelf life. However, this process also removes dietary fiber, iron and many B vitamins. Some refined grain products are white flour, white rice and white bread.

Why are whole grains good for you?

Eating whole grains has many health benefits:

- Grains are a source of dietary fiber, which may help reduce blood cholesterol levels and may lower risk of heart disease, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Fiber is also important for proper bowel function.
- The B vitamins in grains play a key role in metabolism and are essential for a healthy nervous system.
- Grains include iron, magnesium and selenium, important minerals your body needs. Iron carries oxygen in the blood, magnesium is used in building bones, and selenium is important for a healthy immune system.

Tips for getting your whole grains

- Choose foods that list whole-grain ingredients first on the label's ingredient list, such as brown rice, buckwheat, quinoa, rolled oats and oatmeal.
- Substitute whole grains for refined grains. Use whole-grain flour when cooking. Try whole-wheat bread instead of white bread, brown rice instead of white, and whole-wheat pasta.
- Popcorn is a whole grain. Snack on some with little or no salt and butter.
- Make half of your grains whole.



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Source: USDA - www.ChooseMyPlate.gov

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