

[IMAGE]

What's Your Cereal Number?

Whole-grain products offer a multitude of benefits, from providing loads of fiber for a healthy digestive system to boosting antioxidant and micronutrient levels in the body to help prevent chronic diseases. In the United States, most grain products, such as white bread, pasta and sugary cereals, are not actually whole grains, however. Instead, Americans are filling up on these "refined grains," which are essentially junk food.

A recent study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* determined the effects of refined and whole grains on cardiovascular disease risk in over 80,000 male physicians age 40 or older. The physicians reported on their average daily intake of various types of breakfast cereals; cereals containing at least 25% of whole grains or bran by weight were considered whole grains.

Over the next five years, men who ate one or more servings of whole-grain cereals each day were 29% less likely to die of heart attack and 20% less likely to die of cardiovascular disease than men who ate them rarely or never. The amount of total or refined-grain cereals consumed did not significantly affect risks for any forms of cardiovascular disease. Men who ate the most whole-grain cereals were also about 20% less likely to die from any cause over the study period.

How many servings of whole-grain cereals do you eat daily? Whole grains provide even more benefits, including a reduced risk for diabetes. Try eating only those breakfast cereals and breads with a whole grain listed as their primary ingredient. Be sure to actually read the ingredients on the back of the packaging; many products touted as wheat or grain products are actually made from enriched and refined wheat flours. If the first ingredient isn't listed as a whole grain, e.g. "whole wheat flour," you're not really buying a whole-grain product.

Reference:

Liu S, Sesso HD, et al. Is intake of breakfast cereals related to total and cause-specific mortality in men? *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2003;77, pp. 594-599.

Additional information on the benefits of proper nutrition can be found at <http://www.chiroweb.com/tyh/nutrients.html>.

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