

[IMAGE]

The Whole Grain and Nothing But...

By Editorial Staff

Wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley and other cereal grains start off as whole grains - but far too often, by the time they reach the supermarket shelves in various foods, most grains have been refined to that point that most of their health value is lost.

Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel; examples include whole-wheat flour, oatmeal and brown rice. Refined grains have a finer texture and a longer shelf life, but the dietary fiber, iron and many of the B vitamins have been removed. Examples of refined grain products include white flour and white rice. Manufacturers then "enrich" the grains by adding back certain B vitamins and iron after processing.

The amount of grains you need to eat daily depends on a number of variables including age, gender and level of physical activity. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, most Americans consume adequate grains - but not whole grains. The USDA recommends at least half of the grains you consume daily should take the form of whole grains.

Whole Grain - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark The USDA offers the following tips for how to incorporate whole grains into your daily diet. For information on the health benefits of whole grains and other foods, visit www.mypyramid.gov.

1. Substitute whole-grain products for refined products. This is as easy as eating whole-wheat bread or brown rice instead of white bread or white rice.
2. Use whole grains in mixed dishes such as soup and casseroles, or make spaghetti with whole-wheat pasta.
3. Use whole-grain bread or cracker crumbs in meatloaf or on dishes that require breading (eggplant parmesan, baked chicken or fish).
4. Substitute whole-wheat or oat flour for up to half of the flour in pancake, waffle or muffin recipes.
5. Snack on whole-grain cereals or popcorn (with little or no added salt or butter) rather than potato chips.

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