

Make Half Your Grains Whole

At this time of the year, children are starting to prepare to head off to classrooms to learn new skills. We are never too old to learn new things, like learning about shopping for whole grain foods, preparation skills that may help us save money, and how to make at least half your grains whole on your plate.

Grains are divided into two subgroups: whole grains and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel, including the bran, germ and endosperm. Refined grains usually contain only the endosperm, the starchy part, which leaves out a lot of fiber, vitamin E and other nutrients.

People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases.

Try these 10 tips from www.ChooseMyPlate.gov to help you eat more whole grains:

1. Make simple switches. Try using 100 percent whole-wheat bread when making stuffing. Have a turkey sandwich on whole-wheat bread instead of white. Have brown rice instead of white rice as a side dish.
2. Have whole-grain snacks. Try popcorn with a sprinkle of chili powder or garlic powder instead of butter or salt. Try 100 percent whole-wheat crackers.
3. Save some time. Cook extra brown rice or whole-grain barley when you have time. Freeze the rice or barley in meal-sized or recipe-sized amounts to serve later as a side dish.
4. Mix it up with whole grains. Add some barley to vegetable soup or stew. Add some bulgur wheat to casseroles or stir-fries.
5. Try whole-wheat versions. When you make a casserole with rice or pasta, try brown rice or whole-wheat macaroni.
6. Bake some whole-grain goodness. Try substituting whole-wheat flour for up to half of the flour in pancake, waffle or muffin batter. Try other types of flour, such as oat or buckwheat flour.
7. Be a good role model for children. Set a good example by serving and eating whole grains every day with meals or as snacks.
8. Check the label for fiber. Use the Nutrition Facts label to see the fiber content of foods. “Good” sources of fiber have 10 to 19 percent of the Daily Value, or 2.5 grams of fiber per serving. An “excellent” source of fiber contains 20 percent or more of the Daily Value.
9. Know what to look for on the ingredient label. Read the ingredient list and choose products that name a whole-grain ingredient first on the list. Look for terms such as “whole wheat,” “oatmeal,” “brown rice,” “bulgur,” “whole-grain barley,” “whole-grain cornmeal” or “whole oats.”
10. Be a smart shopper. Remember that the color of a food is not an indication that the food is whole grain. Foods labeled as “multi-grain,” “stone-ground,” “cracked wheat” or “seven-grain” may not contain any whole grain.

Question: Why is fiber so important? How much do adults and kids need?

Fiber keeps your digestive system healthy. Some types of fiber also can help lower cholesterol and prevent disease. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, cooked dry beans, and whole grains.

Women should try to get 25 grams daily and men should aim for 38 grams. For kids, add 5 grams to their age. The recommendation for a 5-year-old, therefore, would be 10 grams.

Excerpted from “<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/foodwise/newsletters.htm>.”

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