



Make Way for Whole Grains!

By Lanette Kovachi, MS, RD

Eating grain-based foods like breads, cereals, rice, and pasta are a great way to get the quick-energy your body needs to fuel your day. But, as you may have heard, not all grains are created equal. When selecting grain-based foods, the best way to boost the nutrition content of your diet is to choose more *whole* grains.



Just what is a whole grain vs. refined grain?

A whole grain is the “whole” entire grain. Specifically, a whole grain contains all 3 parts of a grain: bran, endosperm and germ. Refined grains have been processed to remove the germ and bran. When the germ and bran are removed so are many important health boosting minerals and vitamins along with appetite curbing protein and fiber. Generally, certain food products used refined grains to achieve a certain texture or flavor. Often products made with refined grains have nutrients like iron, folate and B vitamins added back in.

So, what’s in it for you?

Diets rich in whole grains have not only been associated with a reduced risk of chronic diseases but also can play a role in weight maintenance. Replacing refined grains like white rice, crackers, refined sugary cereals and other baked goods with whole grain versions is one of the easiest steps you can take to improve your diet and overall health. It’s also one of the best ways to up the flavor and heartiness of some of your favorite foods.

How much do you need and how can you get it?

The Whole Grains Council, a nonprofit consumer advocacy group working to increase consumption of whole grains for better health, recommends consuming 48 grams of whole grains per day and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines recommends that half of your grain intake is from whole grains. That sounds like a number that is hard to hit but there are so many easy and delicious ways to get whole grains and reach that goal.

Just follow these easy tips you can use every day to get more grains:

- 1) Choose whole grain cereals, breads, crackers, and other grain based foods that list whole wheat flour, rolled oats or other “whole” grain as its first ingredient.
- 2) Use brown rice instead of white rice.
- 3) Experiment with side-dishes made with whole grains like quinoa, barley, or whole grain bulgur. Or try mixing these grains into rice, casseroles or soups.
- 4) When baking muffins, breads, cookies, pancakes, etc. try substituting 1/3-1/2 of the regular flour with whole wheat flour or other whole grain flours. When baking cookies, try adding in oats to also up the grain content.
- 5) Choose whole grain snacks like granola bars made with rolled oats, lightly seasoned popcorn, baked tortilla chips or whole grain crackers.

- 6) Top yogurt with rolled-oats, granola, or whole grain cereals
- 7) Swap out white flour tortilla wraps with corn tortillas or whole wheat tortillas.
- 8) Look for products that carry the **Whole Grain Stamp**. The **Whole Grain Stamp** means that a product contains a significant amount of whole grains, like the Subway® 9-Grain Wheat and 9-Grain Honey Oat Bread and Multigrain Flatbread (where available).
- 9) Opt for whole wheat pizza dough when eating out or make your own pizza with whole wheat dough, or whole wheat flatbreads and pitas. For extra whole grain punch, dust dough with cornmeal.
- 10) Use whole wheat pita chips with your favorite hummus or dip.

And with SUBWAY®, you can get your grains while on the go!

Whether you're ordering breakfast, lunch or dinner it is easy to get your whole grains in when you visit us. Choose the 9-Grain Wheat bread or 9-Grain Honey Oat bread and you'll get 24 grams whole grains per 6-inch sandwich (yep, that is half a day's worth of the recommended amount). In fact, when you walk into a SUBWAY® restaurant, you'll see that we display all the bread choices and show you which choices qualify for the Whole Grain Stamp. We make it easy to choose. Paired with your favorite fresh veggies and lean meats, you get a protein and fiber packed sandwich that will keep you satisfied and fueled throughout the day.

Start Small; Finish Healthier

Listen, if you are a die-hard white pasta person (like I am!) or just can't give up the white rice or regular pizza dough that's o.k. But at least try some of these options, you may find you like some of the whole grain versions better than the refined grains. Some changes aren't even noticeable – for example, my family doesn't even realize when I substitute some of the flour in cookies and pancakes for whole wheat flour. If you can try to take steps on just some of the items listed above you will boost your whole grain intake and your nutrition significantly. The good news is there are many delicious ways to get them in. And remember, you don't need to give up white bread for good! Just try to add whole grains whenever you can.

And finally, if you are looking for a fun, new whole grain recipe, here is a super easy snack recipe that my kids love:

It has the whole grain goodness from the oats and nutrition-packed energy from the bananas and sunflower seed butter. A delicious way to fuel active kids!

Banana Oatmeal Energy Bars

- 2 cups quick-cooking oats
- 1 cup sweetened coconut flakes
- ½ cup chocolate chips
- 3 medium bananas, mashed well
- 6 Tbsp. maple syrup
- 2 Tbsp. sunflower seed butter (or peanut butter). I use sunflower seed butter for allergy reasons.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine all ingredients well in mixing bowl and spread mixture evenly into 9" x 9 greased pan. Bake for 25 minutes. Cool completely and cut into 12 bars. Store bars in covered container in refrigerator for up to 5 days.

For more information on whole grain health benefits, tips, and great recipes visit:

<http://wholegrainscouncil.org/>.