

MyPlate Foods to Increase: Whole Grains¹

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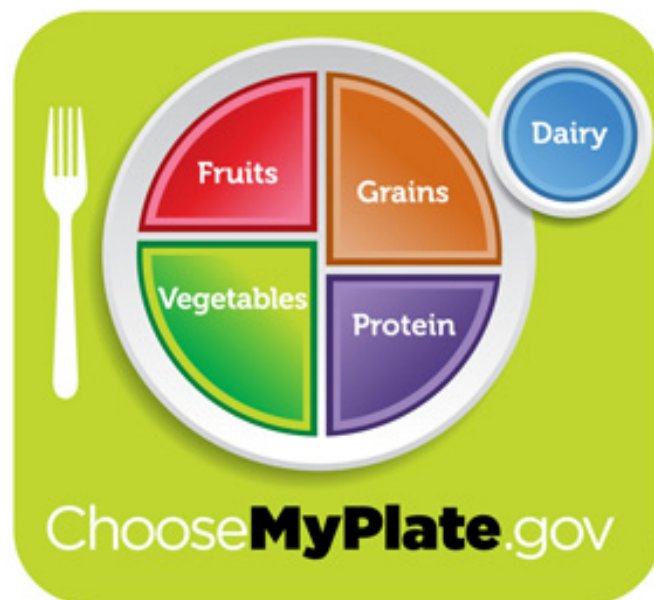
The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently released a new symbol to promote healthier eating. That symbol is called MyPlate and represents the most recent recommendations from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It was designed to remind Americans to eat healthfully. Eating whole grains is one way to make your diet healthier. Most Americans do not get enough whole grains in their diet. This publication provides information on whole grains and their health benefits as well as how to include whole grains in your diet.

What are whole grains?

All grains start off as whole grains. They contain three parts—the bran, the germ, and the endosperm. The bran is the outer coat that protects the grain from sunlight, pests, water, and disease. This outer layer contains beneficial antioxidants, B vitamins, and fiber. The second layer is the germ. It contains B vitamins, protein, minerals, and healthy oils. The endosperm is the innermost layer of a whole grain. It contains carbohydrate, protein, and small amounts of vitamins and minerals.

The following are examples of whole grains:

- Whole-wheat flour
- Oatmeal
- Brown rice
- Popcorn
- Whole-wheat cereal
- Whole-wheat bread



- Whole-wheat crackers
- Whole-wheat pasta

When whole grains are processed or refined, the bran and the germ are removed, leaving only the endosperm. Fiber and other nutrients are lost during the refining process.

Some vitamins and minerals lost during refinement are added back in products labeled “enriched,” but fiber is not replaced. Therefore, enriched products, like white rice, are low in fiber compared to whole-grain foods.

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Sometimes it can be difficult to tell which products contain whole grains. One way to tell is by reading the ingredients list. Many whole-grain products have the words “whole” or “whole grain” before the grain’s name on the list. For example, the words “whole-wheat flour” let you know that it is flour made from whole grains of wheat.

An easy way to identify foods that contain whole grains is to look for the Whole Grain Stamp. There are two types of stamps, the basic stamp and the 100% stamp. Foods with the basic stamp on their package are guaranteed to have at least half a serving of whole grains, while foods labeled with the 100% stamp contain at least one full serving of whole grains.



Figure 2. Whole-grain bread.

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Only seven percent of American adults meet the recommended intake for whole grains, and national surveys indicate that most adolescents and young adults eat less than the recommended amount.

How can you increase your intake of whole grains?

Try the following suggestions during meals or snacks to increase the amount of whole grains you eat every day:

- Breakfast: Try whole-wheat cereal, a whole-grain muffin, or oatmeal to start your day.
- Lunch: Use whole-grain bread for sandwiches and have whole-grain crackers with soup.
- Dinner: Try brown rice as a side, and when you eat pasta, choose one that is made with whole grain.
- Snacks: Choose unbuttered popcorn or whole-grain crackers.

There are plenty of other whole grains to try too, like barley, quinoa, or wild rice. Barley is great when added to soups. Quinoa and wild rice are simple to cook. Just add one cup of quinoa to two cups of water, bring to a boil, and then simmer for 11–15 minutes. Wild rice is cooked the same way except that you need about three cups of water and it needs to simmer for about 45–55 minutes.

Summary

Whole grains provide a variety of health benefits and taste great too. Although most Americans do not get enough whole grains, following the simple recommendations in this publication can help you get enough. So when you look at your plate, remember MyPlate and add whole grains to the grains section. It is a great way to make your diet healthier.



Why are whole grains important?

Eating more whole grains has been shown to lower the risk of chronic diseases, such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Whole grains may also help with weight control and digestive health. Researchers report that a higher intake of whole grains (about 3 ounces per day) is associated with a lower body mass index (BMI) and distribution of fat around the abdomen. Based on some studies, adults who eat more whole grains tend to have a smaller waist size.

How much do I need?

The USDA recommends that at least half of the grain servings you eat are whole grains. Depending on age and gender, five to eight one-ounce equivalents of grains are recommended every day for adults. (A one-ounce equivalent is equal to ½ cup of cooked rice, ½ cup of cooked pasta, 1 slice of bread, or 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal.)

Learn More

To learn more about whole grains, contact the Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Educator in your county (look in the blue pages of your telephone book.) Florida Extension offices are listed online by UF/IFAS at <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/map>.

Recommended Websites

USDA's *MyPlate*: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

This site contains information regarding USDA's new MyPlate and information about all of the food groups.

USDA *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010*: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/PolicyDoc.pdf>

This document contains evidence-based information and nutrition recommendations.

Whole Grains Council: <http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org>

This site contains information on whole grains and the Whole Grain Stamp.



Figure 4. Brown rice.

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