



Healthy Whole Grains and Inflammation

Inflammation is thought to be at the root of many chronic diseases from hay fever to heart attacks. That's why fighting inflammation through your choice of foods is so important.

Some fad-diet books claim that all grains cause inflammation – but solid research actually shows that **whole grains are part of the solution**, not part of the problem. A look at the facts should convince you to add more whole grains to your meals.



Scientists at the University of Nebraska,¹ for instance, knew that **whole grains have long been linked to lower inflammation**, and they set out to find the reason why. They found that eating whole grains (barley, brown rice, or especially a mix of the two) even for a short period altered the essential bacteria in people's digestive systems in a way that decreased system-wide inflammation.

Inflammation plays a key role in both heart disease and diabetes, which explains why people who eat more whole grains have a much lower risk of both these diseases. What you may not know, however, is the way inflammation can affect other areas of our health. Scientists at the National Institutes of Health² found that eating as little as one serving a day of whole grain resulted in an 11.5% drop in CRP (a common marker of inflammation). Since inflammation has been linked to reproductive problems, the scientists believe that **consuming whole grains can improve the health of women of child-bearing age**.

Rather than examine one disease at a time, researchers in Norway and Minnesota³ followed more than 27,000 women for 17 years and determined that habitual whole grain intake significantly reduced the risk of inflammation-linked death. Those who approached the recommended level of **three servings of whole grains a day reduced their overall risk** of death from inflammatory diseases by more than 30%.

You're probably convinced by now, and just wondering how much whole grain you need to eat to make a difference in inflammation. Scientists at the University of Utah determined that the benefits grow with every serving: they estimate that each serving of **whole grains reduces the inflammation-marker CRP** by about 7%.

So dish up some whole grains today – but remember, **the best ones are intact whole grains** like those found in a delicious brown rice pilaf, a quinoa salad, a bowl of oatmeal, or a wheatberry chili. A whole grain cookie is still a cookie!

¹ *Gut Microbes*. 2013 Jul 1;4(4):340-6. Walter et al.

² *Journal of Nutrition*. 2010 Sep;140(9):1669-1676. Gaskins et al.

³ *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2007 Jun;85(6):1606-14

⁴ *Nutrition Reviews*. 2012 Jul;70(7):387-96. Lefevre et al.