



# BUSTED!

## Whole Grains Myths

*From time to time, rumors and myths involving whole grains circulate in the popular press or go viral in social media. This resource provides information to help you get a more balanced view of such issues.*

### **MYTH: WHOLE GRAINS CAUSE INFLAMMATION**

Whole grains are part of the solution, not the problem, when it comes to inflammation. That's important, because research increasingly shows that systemic inflammation may fuel many diseases, from allergies to heart disease to cancer. In a recent clinical trial, researchers at the University of Nebraska showed that eating a cup of whole grain barley or brown rice (or a combination of the two) for as little as four weeks can increase the "good" bacteria in your gut that fight inflammation. In another randomized controlled trial, this time in Iran, overweight girls were divided into two groups, one eating mostly refined grains and one eating mostly whole grains. There was a significant reduction in inflammation markers among those eating whole grains.

### **MYTH: ALL GRAINS MAKE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR SPIKE**

Research links many chronic diseases, from diabetes to heart disease, with diets that send your blood sugar on a roller coaster ride. Indeed, when you eat certain foods, especially those high in refined, highly processed grains and sugar, your blood sugar can spike – then quickly plummet, leaving your energy depleted and causing damage to some bodily systems. It's healthier to choose foods that provide a steady, slow release of glucose (blood sugar).

The Glycemic Index rates how quickly carbohydrate foods are converted into glucose – and you may be surprised to learn that many grain foods have a low GI score (55 or less on the 1 to 100 GI scale is considered low). Virtually all intact whole grains have a very low GI score: whole grain barley has a GI of about 25, wheat berries about 30, rye berries about 35, buckwheat about 45, and brown rice about 48, to cite a few examples.

**The big surprise?** Pasta has a low GI score, with whole grain spaghetti rating about 37, and even "white" pasta coming in at 42-45. That's because the starch structure of pasta causes it to be digested much more slowly than the same amount of flour made into bread. So look for intact whole grains and pasta to enjoy grains that will fuel you slowly and steadily.



### **MYTH: U.S. WHEAT IS GENETICALLY MODIFIED**

The book *Wheat Belly* (and many other sources) attest that wheat in the U.S. food supply has been genetically modified. In fact, there is no GMO wheat commercially available – in large part because U.S. farmers have fought hard against GMO wheat, out of concern that it would put a damper on the export market for U.S.-grown wheat.

### **MYTH: EVERYTHING WILL BE GREAT IF WE JUST STOP EATING ALL GRAINS**

Grains are the most important source of food worldwide, providing nearly 50% of the calories eaten, and are some of the least intensive foods to produce. Suddenly replacing grains with other foods (such as meat) is a shift the earth is not ready for.

As scientists assess the risks and benefits of different food production systems, it is easy to see why grains have been at the core of traditional diets for millennia. Fruits and vegetables, while very nutritious, aren't as energy dense as grains and are harder to grow, transport, and store for year-round enjoyment. So to make up the necessary calories in fruits and vegetables, much more food would have to be grown. Similarly, raising animals for meat production requires a substantial amount of land and water. For example, beef production uses 10.19 liters of water to produce 1 calorie of food, compared to only 2.09 liters per calorie of fruits, 1.34 liters per calorie of vegetables, and 0.51 liters per calorie of grains. Shifting diets away from grains and towards more energy intensive foods puts an irresponsible burden on our planet's precious resources.

For more whole grains myths, visit

[Oldways Whole Grains Council website  
www.wholegrainscouncil.org/myths-busted](http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org/myths-busted)