

# THE WHOLE GRAIN TRUTH

**PLEASING TO THE TASTEBUDS AND THE HEART, WHOLESOME GRAINS HAVE FOUND THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE ON HEALTHY PLATES.**



MALCOLM ROMAIN/ISTOCK

## ONE OF THE BEST WAYS

to take care of yourself is to watch what you put in your mouth. Most people are pretty savvy these days about avoiding overly processed and fatty foods. They are choosing low-fat calcium-rich foods and lean cuts of meat or poultry and are well aware of the disease-fighting benefits of a diet rich in antioxidants.

For many, the word "antioxidants" conjures up dark, leafy broccoli and spinach and colorful sweet potatoes and carrots. Those are healthy choices, but the truth is that some whole grains contain protective antioxidants in quantities

rivaling or exceeding those in fruits and veggies, according to a Cornell study. Wheat and oats, it turns out, almost equal broccoli and spinach in antioxidant activity, and corn has almost twice the antioxidants of apples.

This is just a drop in the bucket of research that has put whole grains front and center in today's healthful diets. Studies show that eating whole instead of refined grains can help lower the risks of a variety of conditions, from stroke and heart disease to diabetes and certain cancers. But it doesn't stop there. Researchers at McMaster University in Ontario found that eating whole grains reduced the risk of gum disease, and several studies have concluded that whole-grain intake helps maintain a healthy weight.

So how much whole grain do you need to reap these benefits? Current guidelines recommend three or more one-ounce whole-grain servings a day. That can be bread, pasta, oatmeal, cereals, breakfast or snack bars, crackers or many other tasty fiber-filled options. The key word, of course, is "whole," which refers to a grain with the entire seed or kernel intact.

Look for package labeling that identifies the food product as "made with 100 percent whole grain" or with the claim "Diets rich in whole-grain food and low in saturated fat and cholesterol may help reduce the risk of heart disease." The first item listed in the ingredient list on a package should include the word "whole." Aim for a serving of tasty whole grains at every meal or snack and your whole body will thank you.

## Resources

### ORGANIZATIONS

**American Heart Association (AHA)**  
7272 Greenville Ave.  
Dallas, TX 75231  
800/242-8721; [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)  
The AHA offers print and online materials on reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke. Its diet and nutrition Web site offers advice on making nutritious food choices, cooking the healthy way and working whole grains into your diet.

### WEB SITES

**The Whole Grains Council**  
[www.wholegrainscouncil.org](http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org)  
Brought to you by the group (grain millers, manufacturers, scientists and chefs) that helped institute the consumer-friendly Whole Grain labels on products, this site offers loads of information on healthy grains, including the latest research and plenty of recipes.

### USDA My Pyramid

[www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/grains\\_tips.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/grains_tips.html)  
Go inside the food pyramid at this site from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). You'll find tips on how to identify healthful grains, figure out portion sizes and work them into your daily diet. Its interactive MyPyramid Tracker can help you choose the foods and amounts that are right for you. You'll get advice on smart choices from every food group, how to balance food intake and physical activity and how to get the most nutrition out of your calories.

### 101 Cookbooks

[www.101cookbooks.com/whole\\_grain\\_recipes](http://www.101cookbooks.com/whole_grain_recipes)  
From Whole Wheat Pizza Dough and Pancakes to Baked Polenta Fries and Whole Grain Triple Chocolate Cookies, the recipes on this site created by Heidi Swanson—a San Francisco-based food lover, photographer and cookbook author—are wholly delicious.

### BOOKS

***Whole Grains Every Day, Every Way***  
by Lorna Sass, Clarkson Potter, 2006, \$20.48 (hardcover)  
Not only is this an interesting primer on whole grains (it details 20 kinds of rice and wheat), but it makes working in your daily healthy dose of grains a total pleasure—no matter the meal. With delicious-sounding, heart-healthy recipes, including Quinoa and Calamari Salad and Corn Polenta With Sausage and Peppers.