



# nutrinews

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Q:

**How do I tell if something is "whole grain"? Why is it better for you?**

A:

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, corn, as well as rye and barley, is a grain product. A "whole grain" product includes the entire grain kernel, including not only carbohydrate and protein but fiber and hundreds of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients like phytoestrogens, antioxidants, and phenols.

Processed grain, like the "enriched wheat flour" found in white breads, many bagels, pastries, cakes and pastas, has been crushed and sorted so that only the carbohydrate and protein elements of the grain are used.

You don't get much of the fiber or other healthful nutrients present in the entire grain.

In the past, fiber was the primary reason whole grains were considered better for us. Research now shows that the many nutrients in whole grains play a big role in keeping us healthy, too.

So how do you know if a product is made with "whole grain"? Current food labeling makes it difficult to tell. "Whole grain" does not appear on the Nutrition Facts panel. Fiber content alone is not a good indicator because the amount of fiber in different grains varies. Manufacturers are working on resolving this problem.

In the meantime, read the Ingredients Label and look for the words "whole grain" as the first ingredient for the best indication that it is a whole grain product.

New dietary guidelines recommend that half of your grain servings each day come from "whole grains". Moving from processed grain products to whole grain

products will not only improve the "nutrition bang for your calorie buck", you will also feel fuller with less. Here are some examples in standard serving sizes of whole grain vs. enriched, processed grain products. Your mission: get at least half of your daily grain servings from the whole grain list and fill in with enriched, processed grains.

### Whole Grain Choices

- 1 slice "whole grain" bread
- 1 oz (~1 cup) "whole grain" cereal
- 1/2 cup cooked brown rice or "whole wheat" pasta
- 5-6 "whole grain" crackers
- 1 "whole grain" frozen waffle
- 1 seven inch whole wheat or corn tortilla
- 3 cups popped popcorn

### "Enriched", Processed, or Refined Choices

- 1 slice white (enriched wheat) bread
- 1 oz (~1 cup) "enriched" sugar added cereal
- 1/2 cup cooked white rice or pasta
- 9 pretzel twists
- 1 four inch pancake
- 1 seven inch flour tortilla
- 20 goldfish crackers

Got a question? email:  
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