

September: National Whole Grains Month

By: Lisa Franzen-Castle, RD, PhD, Nutrition Specialist
 UNL Panhandle Research & Extension Center
 Author E-mail: lfranzen2@unl.edu



Know how. Know now.

Did you know that people who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases? Grains provide many nutrients vital for health and it is recommended that at least half of all the grains eaten be whole grains. September is whole grains month, and on average most Americans eat enough grains, but few are whole grains. Check out the following tips to help increase your intake of whole grains.



vital for health and it is recommended that at least half of all the grains eaten be whole grains. September is whole grains month, and on average most Americans

Make more of your grains whole:

What are grains? Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product. Examples include bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel — the bran, germ, and endosperm. Examples include



whole-wheat flour, bulgur (cracked wheat), oatmeal, whole cornmeal, and brown rice.

How much is needed? These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond normal daily activities. Those who are more physically active may be able to consume more while staying within calorie needs.

		Daily recommendation	Daily min. amount whole grains
Children	2-3 years	3 oz. equivalents	1 ½ oz. equivalents
	4-8 years	5 oz. equivalents	2 ½ oz. equivalents
Girls	9-13 years	5 oz. equivalents	3 oz. equivalents
	14-18 years	6 oz. equivalents	3 oz. equivalents
Boys	9-13 years	6 oz. equivalents	3 oz. equivalents
	14-18 years	8 oz. equivalents	4 oz. equivalents
Women	19-30 years	6 oz. equivalents	3 oz. equivalents
	31-50 years	6 oz. equivalents	3 oz. equivalents
	51+ years	5 oz. equivalents	3 oz. equivalents
Men	19-30 years	8 oz. equivalents	4 oz. equivalents
	31-50 years	7 oz. equivalents	3 ½ oz. equivalents
	51+ years	6 oz. equivalents	3 oz. equivalents

What counts as an ounce? In general, 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, or ½ cup of cooked rice, cooked pasta, or cooked cereal can be considered as a 1 ounce equivalent from the Grains Group. Below are examples of specific amounts that count as 1 ounce equivalents.



- **Bagel:** 1 mini bagel, ½ regular-size bagel, ¼ large bagel
- **Biscuit, muffin:** 1 small (2 inch diameter)
- **Breads:** 1 regular slice, 1 small slice French, 4 snack-size slices rye bread
- **Ready-to-eat breakfast cereal:** 1 cup flakes or rounds, 1¼ cups puffed
- **Cooked grains** (e.g., bulgur, couscous, quinoa): ½ cup cooked
- **Cornbread:** 1 small (2½ inches by 1 inch by 1½ inches)
- **Crackers:** 5 whole wheat crackers, 2 rye crisp breads, 7 square or round crackers
- **English muffin:** ½ muffin
- **Oatmeal:** ½ cup cooked, 1 packet instant, 1 ounce (⅓ cup) dry (regular or quick)
- **Pancakes, waffles:** 1 (4½ inch diameter), 2 small (3 inch diameter)
- **Popcorn:** 3 cups, popped
- **Rice, pasta:** ½ cup cooked, 1 ounce dry
- **Tortillas:** 1 small flour (6 inch diameter), 1 corn (6 inch diameter)

What are the health benefits? Consuming whole grains as part of a healthy diet may reduce the



risk of heart disease, help with weight management, and reduce constipation. Grains are important sources of many nutrients, including dietary fiber, several B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, and folate), and minerals (iron, magnesium, and selenium).



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Whole grains at meals. Use whole-grain breads for sandwiches, try brown rice stuffing in baked green peppers or tomatoes, or put whole-wheat macaroni in macaroni and cheese. Try rolled oats or a crushed, unsweetened whole-grain cereal as breading for baked chicken, fish, or veal cutlets. Try an unsweetened, whole-grain ready-to-eat cereal as croutons in a salad.



Whole grains as snacks. Snack on ready-to-eat, whole-grain cereals. Add whole-grain flour or oatmeal to baked treats. Try 100% whole-grain snack crackers. Popcorn, a whole grain, can be a healthy snack if made with little or no added salt and butter.



What to look for on food labels. Choose foods that list a whole grain (such as brown rice, oatmeal, bulgur, wild rice, whole-grain corn, whole oats, whole rye or whole wheat) first on the ingredient list. Multi-grain, stone-ground, seven-grain or bran are usually not whole-grain foods. Food color is not always a good indicator of whole grain. Bread can be brown due to molasses or other added ingredients. Also, choose products with a higher percent daily value (%DV) for fiber.



To broaden your food horizons with whole grains, try substituting a whole grain product for a refined one and using the Nutrition Facts Label to help you choose more whole grains at the grocery store. For more food, nutrition, and health information go to food.unl.edu.

Additional Resources & Links:

- **MyPlate: Grains Group, G1607.** This UNL publication describes ways to include grain food products, especially whole grains, into the diet. <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/g1607.pdf>

- **Grain Group: Make half your grains whole.** Nutrition Education Program (NEP) Fact Sheet. <http://go.unl.edu/4pa>
- **Whole Grains Council.** Learn about the universe of new tastes you've been missing out on and try out these recipes using whole grains <http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org/recipes>
- **USDA ChooseMyPlate.gov:** Health and Nutrition Information on the Grains Group. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/grains.html>.
- **Nutrition Facts: An interactive guide to food labels.** Use this interactive guide to the Nutrition Facts label to help understand what you're eating so you can make healthier choices. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/nutrition-facts/NU00293/>

Sources:

1. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2012. Choose Food Groups: Grains. Accessed at: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/grains.html>.
2. Franzen-Castle, L., Fenton, A., Frecks, F., and Hansen, S. 2012. MyPlate: Grains Group. University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Extension Neb Guide. Accessed at: <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/e-public/pages/publicationD.jsp?publicationId=374>
3. Whole Grains Council. 2011. Whole Grains 101. Accessed at: <http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101>.
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 (7th ed.). <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm>.

Updated: August 2012

This Newsletter has been peer reviewed



Scan this QR Code with your smartphone or other electronic device to go directly to the food.unl.edu website.