

## Oatmeal – Whole Grain Goodness

Every January, people make resolutions or goals for the New Year. Usually, they include something about exercising more and eating better. What goals have you set for this year? Consider one about increasing the servings of whole grains in your diet. According to the Whole Grains Council the benefits of whole grains include reduced risks of stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease and better weight maintenance.



January is National Oatmeal Month, and oatmeal is a delicious way to add whole grains to your eating patterns during the chilly winter season. Oats are full of important nutrients like vitamins B and E, calcium, magnesium, and zinc. They contain beta-glucan, a special kind of fiber, found to be especially effective in lowering cholesterol and insoluble dietary fiber, which has anticancer properties. Best of all, oats, like most other whole grains, can help us maintain a healthy weight.

There are several types of oatmeal such as rolled oats, quick cooking oats, instant oats, oat flour, and steel-cut oats. All these types have similar nutritional values, but many times instant oatmeal has other ingredients added such as sugar. The only way to know if there are ‘extra’ ingredients is to read the ingredient label of the product.

Ideas to boost nutrition and flavor include:

- Make oatmeal with calcium-rich milk.
- Toss in raisins or dried cranberries and chopped walnuts.
- Add fresh or frozen berries or fruits like bananas.
- Mix in ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce.
- Sprinkle with cinnamon for sweetness, it adds flavor without calories.

If eating oatmeal is not something you enjoy, try using rolled oats in baked products like cookies, muffins, breads, or other desserts. Or they can be used in place of breadcrumbs in meat loaf or patties. Pair a goal of eating more servings of whole grains with a regular exercise program for a healthier new year.

### Physical Activity Tip:

Surround your children with active fun!

- Set aside a play area indoors. Find a space where children can tumble and toss things – without breaking something or getting hurt.
- Find a place outdoors to run, jump, and kick a ball.
- Turn active play into family time, maybe after a meal.



### Sources:

1. 5 Grains to Keep Your Family Healthy, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: <https://rb.gy/27bt0x>
2. Whole Grains 101, Whole Grains Council: <http://bit.ly/1ZMmDpF>

For more information check out Food Fun on the Run at: <http://go.unl.edu/familyrun>. Nancy Frecks wrote this newsletter. It has been peer-reviewed and updated in 2025.