

The Scoop on Whole Grains



You keep hearing that you should eat more whole grains, but what are they? How much should you eat? Eating at least three or more one-ounce equivalents of whole grains daily can reduce the risk of some diseases, according to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These guidelines are published every 5 years by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“So if you want to do yourself some good, eating three or more servings of whole grains each day can help you achieve a healthy diet,” says David Acheson, M.D., the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) associate commissioner for foods.

FDA’s Role

FDA is responsible for regulations and activities dealing with the proper labeling of foods, including ingredient statements, nutrient content, and

health claims.

FDA also offers guidance to help manufacturers understand what the agency considers appropriate for statements on food labels, including those related to whole-grain content.

What Are Whole Grains?

Whole grains are cereal grains that consist of the intact, ground, cracked, or flaked kernel, which includes the bran, the germ, and the inner most part of the kernel (the endosperm).

Some examples of whole grains include whole wheat, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal, brown rice, whole-grain barley, whole rye, and buckwheat. Spelt, often thought of as a unique whole grain, is actually a member of the wheat family.

When trying to select products that contain whole grains, look for those that show whole grains listed first on the ingredient list. The ingredient list on a food label shows ingredients in the order of the most abundant by weight.

For products such as bread or pasta to be labeled whole grain, the grain can be ground, cracked, or flaked, but it must retain the same proportions of bran, germ, and endosperm.

A Daily Dose of Whole Grains

Eating at least three one-ounce equivalents of whole grains per day can reduce the risk of several chronic diseases. Examples of a one-ounce equivalent include:

- 1/2 cup cooked oatmeal
- 1/2 cup cooked 100% whole-grain pasta
- 1/2 cup cooked brown rice or whole-grain barley
- 1 regular slice of 100% whole-grain bread
- 1 cup of whole-grain ready-to-eat cereal (flakes or rounds) or 1/4 cup puffed. [FDA](#)

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For More Information

Guidance on Whole Grain Label Statements

www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flgragui.html

Dietary Guidelines for Americans
www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/