

Getting more whole grains

Are you confused about whole grains? Why do we need to eat them? What does whole grain mean?

Whole grains are the seeds of cereal plants such as oats and wheat. Whole grains are as close to their natural state as you can get where the seed retains all of its three components.



The three parts of a grain are all edible:

Germ – the “embryo”, which can sprout into a new plant

Endosperm – the germ’s food supply, which will give it the energy to grow into a plant

Bran – the outer layers, which are the fibrous protective coating of the seed

Each part of the grain is rich in different nutrients¹ and that’s why eating the whole grain is the best option to get all the nutrition the grain has to offer.

When we process grains, some of the parts can be removed and they no longer resemble their natural state – they become refined. Foods that contain all three parts of the grain in the correct proportions are still whole grains even though the grain may be processed or milled². An example of this may be flours used in making wholemeal bread or whole grain breakfast cereal.

BRAN = FIBRE

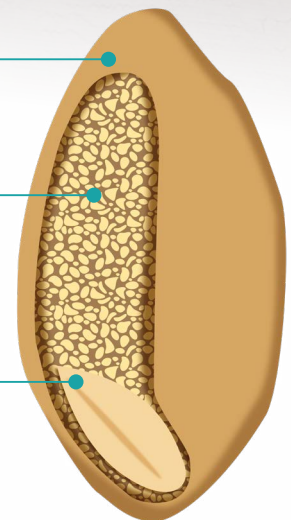
Fibre
some B Vitamins
Minerals
Antioxidants

ENDOSPERM = ENERGY

Carbohydrates
Protein

GERM = NUTRIENTS

Essential Fats
Vitamin E
some B Vitamins
Minerals
Antioxidants



Nature’s little pill

Other than being plant-based and packed with fibre and essential nutrients, whole grains can help us to live longer³.

Large scientific studies have shown that eating whole grains can reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer³.

They also have a positive impact on our microbiome by feeding the good gut bacteria *bifidobacterium* and *lactobacillus*. The good bacteria then help to look after our health from the inside⁴.

How much whole grain should I eat every day⁵?

Adults:	48g	
Children:	48g	(9+ years)
	30–40g	(3–8 years)
	24g	(1–3 years)

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that more than half of your grain intake should be whole grain.



Whole grain content of common foods⁵



1 slice of whole meal bread
~ 15-20 g



2/3 cup of whole grain flaked cereal
~ 15-30 g



2 wheat cereal biscuits
~ 30 g



1/2 cup of cooked porridge
~ 30 g



1/2 cup of cooked grains like brown rice or quinoa
~ 30 g



2 cups of popcorn
~ 15-25 g



1/2 cup whole meal pasta
~ 30 g

Aim for 3 serves of whole grain foods each day

Did you know?

Almost 3/4 of Australians are not eating enough whole grains. On average we are eating less than 1/2 the recommended amount and almost 1/3 of us are not eating any at all⁶.

How do I know what to buy?

Many whole grain foods will claim to be “whole grain” on the front of the pack making it easier to identify them. Look out for words such as ‘whole’, ‘wholemeal’, ‘mixed grain’, ‘cracked’, ‘flaked’ or ‘kibbled’ next to the name of the grain in the ingredient list. In many cases, the percentage of whole grain is listed in the ingredients list. The higher the percentage, the better the whole grain content.

How do I get more whole grains in my diet?

If you haven’t been eating whole grain foods in the past, not to worry, it’s easy to get started.

Your taste buds might need time to adjust to the nuttier taste and your good gut bugs will take some time to adapt to all the fibre coming their way.

Remember to drink lots of water to ease your gut into having a higher fibre intake.

Can I still eat whole grains if I can't have gluten?

Many whole grains are gluten free, which means people with coeliac disease or gluten-sensitivity CAN eat them. See our handy list below to help you choose what’s right for you.

Simple swaps to get you started

White rice →	→ Wild or brown rice
White pasta →	→ Wholemeal pasta
White bread →	→ Wholemeal or whole grain bread
Refined grain cereal →	→ Whole grain breakfast flakes, granola or oats
Potato crisps →	→ Popcorn
White rice crackers →	→ Brown rice crackers

Gluten containing whole grains

- Barley
- Oats
- Rye
- Triticale
- Wheat
(including durum, einkorn, emmer, farro, Kamut®, spelt, and bulgur)

Gluten FREE whole grains

- Amaranth
- Buckwheat
- Corn
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Rice
- Sorghum
- Teff

1. Fardet A. Nutr Res Rev. 2010;23:65-134.
2. FSANZ, <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/nutrition/wholegrain>
3. Aune et al. BMJ. 2016;353.

4. So et al. Am J Clin Nutr 2018; 107:1-19.
5. GLNC <https://www.ginc.org.au/grains/grains-recommendations/whole-grain-dti>
6. Galea et al. Public Health Nutr. 2017:1-7.