



# Whole Grain Goodness

## What is a whole grain?

A whole grain food has all three parts of the grain, and each part has different vitamins and minerals that work together to provide nutrition. Many people only think of wheat and other bread products when they hear the word “grain,” but there are many foods that contain whole grains.

## Why do whole grains matter?

Whole grains are higher in fiber, iron and vitamins than processed grains like white flour. Fiber can help your child pass bowel movements, and iron and vitamins are very important for a child’s growth and development. People who eat more whole grains are less likely to struggle with their weight and other serious health conditions like colon cancer.

## How much whole grain does my child need?

This depends on your child’s age and size. A good guide is to make at least half of your child’s grain servings whole grain. For example, if your child eats 6 servings of grain, at least 3 of those servings should be whole grain.

## How do I know if a food is whole grain?

Look for the words “whole grain” on the package. Foods with at least 51% whole grain will have a special label on them like the one shown at the top of this page. You can also check the ingredients; to be a whole grain product a food should have a whole grain listed as the first ingredient.

A whole grain bread will have “whole wheat flour” as the first ingredient. A bread with “wheat flour” as the first ingredient is not whole grain, even if the bread is labeled “wheat bread.”

Foods labeled multigrain or 100% wheat are not necessarily whole grain. Many of these foods contain grains and flour mixed, but do not have only whole grains.

The fiber content of a food can also tell you if it is whole grain. Most whole grain foods have at least 2 or 3 grams of fiber per serving, refined grain foods will have 1 gram.

**Common whole grains:** Brown rice, wild rice, oatmeal, popcorn, whole wheat flour, and pearl barley

## Less common whole grains:

### Quinoa

Rinse grains before cooking.  
Simmer 1 cup quinoa in 2 cups water for about 15 minutes. Fluff and serve.

### Bulgur

Add 1 cup of bulgur to 2 cups of boiling water. Simmer about 10 minutes. Let stand covered for a few minutes. Fluff and serve.

### Farro

Add enough water to cover the grain by 2 inches. Soak for at least 20 minutes and up to 12 hours. Simmer about 20-40 minutes until tender. Drain and serve.

### Couscous

Mix 2 cups water and 1 cup couscous in microwave safe bowl. Stir, cover bowl and microwave for 3 minutes. Let bowl stand for 5 minutes, stir with fork and serve.

**Amaranth:** Place 1½ cups water and ½ cup amaranth in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until water is absorbed. This will take about 20 minutes. Stir with fork and serve.



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### How to add more whole grains to your daily meals

#### While shopping for groceries:

- Start your child's day off right with a breakfast cereal made with whole grain. Remember to look at the label on the box. You can also try oatmeal which is a cheap, easy-to-cook whole grain.
- Choose whole grain breads, pasta, tortillas, bagels, pita bread or rolls over types made from white or processed flour.

#### While cooking:

- Try using whole wheat or oat flour for up to half of the flour in pancake, waffle, muffin or other flour-based recipes.
- Add whole grains to mixed dishes. Try adding brown rice, barley or wild rice to soups or casseroles.
- Use oats or crumbs from whole wheat bread or crackers as breading for dishes like meatloaf.
- Need a side dish? Whole-wheat couscous is a tasty option that's ready in 5 minutes. Instant, frozen or microwavable brown rice makes a yummy side dish. Both are quick-to-fix and full of whole grain.
- Add oats to cookies or other desserts.
- Freeze leftover cooked brown rice, bulgur, or barley. Heat and serve it later as a quick side dish.

#### While choosing snacks for your child:

- Popcorn is a whole grain and can be a healthy snack if made with little or no added salt or butter.
- You can also find crackers and pretzels made with whole grain flour.
- Make trail mix with whole grain cereal, dried fruit, and nuts.
- Serve whole grain cereal with yogurt or milk as a yummy and filling snack.

#### While eating out:

- Ask for whole grain choices. Many restaurants offer whole grain pasta or brown rice.
- At delis, order sandwiches made with whole grain bread, rolls and pita.

### What if my child doesn't want to eat whole grains?

It is common for a child to say no to a new food when it is first offered. Whole grains are no exception to this rule. Never force your child to eat something they don't want. Instead, let them learn to like it on their own.

You can try these tips to help:

- Involve your child in meal planning and preparation. This helps them explore new foods.
- Whole grain foods can taste different than processed foods. Start by mixing a little whole grain cereal with processed cereal or white pasta with whole wheat pasta.
- Try, try again. It can take many tries for a child to learn to like a food. If you keep offering whole grains without forcing your child to eat them they will learn to like them.

