

Importance of Good Nutrition – The Grain Food Group

Tips to Help Keep Your Health On Track!

As part of a series of articles on the importance of good nutrition, this month’s article is the last in the series and focuses on the grain food group. This article provides you with general information about the grain food group, such as: what are grains, how much grain is needed daily, what are the main types of grains, the health benefits of grains, and tips for making wiser choices from the grain food group.⁽¹⁾

| What Are Grains? | How Much Grain Is Needed Daily? | What Are the Main Types of Grains? | Health Benefits of Grains | Tips for Making Wiser Choices | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| <p>Grains, also referred to as cereal, are usually the biggest category in nutrition guides. A cereal is a grass cultivated for the edible components of its grain. Worldwide, grains, such as wheat, rice, oat, and barley (inclusive of starches like bread and pasta) provide more food energy than any other type of crop.⁽¹⁾</p> <p>Many grain products contain a noticeable amount of bran. While bran provides fiber essential to our overall health, food products with added bran, or a stand-alone bran product like oat bran, are not generally whole grain products.⁽¹⁾</p> <p>It is important to check the list of ingredients on food products to determine if they are made from grain and what other ingredients may have been added to ensure the product you are consuming is a grain product.⁽¹⁾</p> <p>Because many grains and legumes (various beans) are lacking in different essential amino acids, many vegetarians combine their grains with legumes. By mixing grains with legumes, a more well-balanced diet may be formed for vegetarians. Some examples of these two food combinations are shown below:⁽¹⁾</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tofu with rice • lentils with rice • beans with corn tortillas • peanut butter with wheat bread | <p>The amount of grain needed daily can vary based on sex, age, and level of physical activity.⁽²⁾</p> <p>The daily allowances shown below are recommended based on less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per day:⁽²⁾</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 15%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%; text-align: center;"><u>Age</u></th> <th style="width: 15%; text-align: center;"><u>Ounces</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2" style="vertical-align: top;">Children:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2-3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4-8</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">-----</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2" style="vertical-align: top;">Girls:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9-13</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">14-18</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">-----</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2" style="vertical-align: top;">Boys:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9-13</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">14-18</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">-----</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2" style="vertical-align: top;">Women:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">19-50</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">51+</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">-----</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3" style="vertical-align: top;">Men:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">19-30</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">31-50</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">51+</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>1 Ounce Serving Equivalents⁽²⁾</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice of whole wheat bread • ½ cup cooked brown rice • ½ cup cooked oatmeal • 5 whole wheat crackers • 1 cup toasted oat cereal • ½ whole wheat English muffin • ½ cup cooked whole wheat spaghetti, macaroni, or noodles | | <u>Age</u> | <u>Ounces</u> | Children: | 2-3 | 3 | 4-8 | 5 | ----- | | | Girls: | 9-13 | 5 | 14-18 | 6 | ----- | | | Boys: | 9-13 | 6 | 14-18 | 8 | ----- | | | Women: | 19-50 | 6 | 51+ | 5 | ----- | | | Men: | 19-30 | 8 | 31-50 | 7 | 51+ | 6 | <p>Grains are split between two groups; whole grains and refined grains.⁽²⁾</p> <p>Whole grains have all parts of the grain seed still intact (the bran, the germ, and the endosperm) and include foods, such as:⁽²⁾</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whole wheat bread • whole grain cereal • whole grain crackers • steel-cut oatmeal • whole wheat bran • brown rice • whole grain pasta <p>Refined grains have been processed or milled, producing a finer texture. While they provide a longer shelf life, this process removes the dietary fiber and many nutrients. As a result, most refined grains are <i>enriched</i> with iron and B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, and folic acid) and include the following foods:⁽²⁾</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • white bread • white flour • white rice • flour tortillas • white pasta/noodles • rolled oats | <p>Whole grains are a great source of vitamins, minerals, fats, protein, carbohydrates, and oil.⁽¹⁾</p> <p>Eating whole grains may reduce the risk of some chronic diseases and provides various nutrients important to the health and maintenance of your body.⁽¹⁾</p> <p>Dietary fiber, found in whole grains, may help to lower blood cholesterol levels, the risk of heart disease, obesity, and Type 2 diabetes, as well as helping with gastrointestinal function.</p> <p>Vitamin A, found in foods like cabbage, carrots, lettuce, and spinach, may help protect against infections and keep eyes and skin healthy.</p> <p>Vitamin B, found in many refined enriched grains, plays an important role in metabolism, helping the body release energy from fats, proteins, and carbohydrates.</p> <p>Folic acid, found in grain products fortified with folate, helps the body form red blood cells, especially important for pregnant women as it may lower the risk of certain defects during fetal development.</p> | <p>At least half of all your daily grains should be whole grains. Consuming more whole grains may help with weight management as they provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories. The following tips may help when planning your daily meals:⁽¹⁾</p> <p>For snacks, choose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • popcorn with little or no added butter • ready-to-eat toasted oat cereal • 100% whole grain snack crackers • whole grain or oat flour for your favorite cookie recipe <p>For meals, choose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whole wheat bread instead of white bread • brown rice or whole wheat pasta instead of white rice • whole grains, such as barley, mixed in dishes like vegetable soup or stews • whole wheat or oat flour and substitute it for half of the flour in your flour-based recipes |
| | <u>Age</u> | <u>Ounces</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Girls: | 9-13 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 14-18 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Boys: | 9-13 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Women: | 19-50 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Men: | 19-30 | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 31-50 | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 51+ | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

⁽¹⁾www.cdc.gov/nutrition ⁽²⁾www.choosemyplate.gov