



WHAT'S A WHOLE GRAIN? FOR PARENTS

Support and Promote the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*

You've heard it before: eat more whole grains. *But what's a whole grain? Are all cereals whole grain? What about bread and pasta? MyPlate* recommends that children and adults strive to make half of the grains they eat every day whole grains. That's because whole grains contain more vitamins, minerals, and fiber than processed grain foods.

Are you and your family eating enough whole grains? Do you know how to tell if a food is made with whole grains? Is your child offered whole grains at school? Read on for more information.

WHY WHOLE GRAINS?

Whole grains are better for you than foods that are made from refined grains. Whole grains have more natural nutrients, vitamins, minerals and fiber than foods that are made with processed or refined grains.

WHAT'S A WHOLE GRAIN?

Whole grains, or foods made from them contain all the essential parts and naturally occurring nutrients of the entire grain seed. This means that 100% of the original grain kernel—all of the bran, germ, and endosperm—must be present to qualify as a whole grain.

EXAMPLES OF WHOLE GRAINS

The following, when consumed in a form including the bran, germ and endosperm, are examples of whole grain foods and flours according to the Whole Grains Council:

- Amaranth
- Barley
- Buckwheat
- Corn, including whole cornmeal and popcorn
- Millet
- Oats, including oatmeal
- Quinoa
- Rice, both brown rice and colored rice
- Rye
- Sorghum (also called milo)
- Teff
- Triticale
- Wheat, including varieties such as spelt, emmer, farro, einkorn, Kamut®, durum and forms such as bulgur, cracked wheat and wheatberries
- Wild rice

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF A FOOD IS 100% WHOLE GRAIN?

Start by reading the ingredient list. A whole grain such as whole wheat, whole oats, whole rye, should be listed on the ingredient list—first because ingredients are listed by weight. If there are no other grains on the ingredient list—the food is made with 100% whole grains. If there are other grains listed such as enriched wheat flour, rice flour, etc. that means that some, but not all of the food is whole grain. You can also look for the words: **100% whole grain**; that means that all of the grains included in the product, even though there may be more than one grain listed are whole grains.

WHAT ABOUT FIBER?

You can't tell whether a food is whole grain or not by looking at the amount of fiber listed on the label. If a food is high in fiber, there's a good chance it's made with whole grain ingredients, but that's not always true. Food companies are now adding fiber-boosters such as chicory root or inulin to boost the fiber content of refined grains like white bread or bagels. That increases the fiber content of the food but doesn't make them whole grain. Although fiber is important, there are lots of other good-for-you things in whole grains that you won't get by adding fiber to refined grains.

Important:

Just because a food isn't 100% whole grain doesn't mean it's bad for you. If a whole grain is listed first on the ingredient list it's probably a pretty good choice since it contains mostly whole grains by weight.



WHOLE GRAINS IN SCHOOL

Do you ever wonder if your child is offered whole grains at school? Are the breadsticks, pizza crusts, or cereals they eat made with whole grains? Schools that are implementing the Michigan Nutrition Standards agree to...

- Serve whole grains at least three times per week as part of the National School Breakfast Program;
- Serve whole grains at least half of the time as part of the National School Lunch Program;
- Serve whole grains at least once a week as part of the After School Snack Program.
- Encourage serving whole grains at classroom parties or celebrations, school-sponsored functions, concession stands, in vending machines and all other places food is offered or served on school campuses.

Your school foodservice director can tell you which foods offered and served at school are whole grain and which ones are not. If you don't know, ask.

HELP YOUR CHILD EAT MORE WHOLE GRAINS

- Read cereal box labels and buy cereal that is whole grain or mostly whole grain.
- Make sandwiches or toast with whole grain bread.
- Try cooking and serving whole grains you haven't tried before such as whole grain pasta, brown rice, quinoa, or barley.
- Provide snacks that are whole grain such as whole grain snack bars, crackers, popcorn, and trail mix.