

# Parent Communications— Whole Grains

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## Get the Whole Story on Whole Grains

Whole grains contain fiber, vitamin E, and healthy fats. Whole grains help keep your blood sugar under control and your arteries clear, and they also make you feel full longer. Refined grains (like white bread, white rice, and pasta) do not have the nutrients or health benefits of whole grains. Eat whole-grain products instead of refined ones whenever possible!

When shopping for grains for your family, purchase foods made from whole grains. There are many whole-grain options available for the same price as refined options, like whole-wheat bread, whole-wheat pitas, whole-grain crackers, whole-grain cereals, and whole-wheat tortillas. Select whole-grain foods by looking for key words on the food labels and ingredient list. Here's how you do it:

- ▶ **Read the nutrition label.** Choose 100% whole-grain or whole-wheat breads and cereals that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving and no more than 5 grams of sugar per serving.
- ▶ **Read the ingredient list.** Choose breads and cereals that list a whole grain first. Examples are whole wheat, barley, oats, rye, brown rice, whole cornmeal, and millet.
- ▶ **Watch out for misleading terms.** Foods that are marketed as "multi-grain," "100% wheat," "made with whole grains," and "seven grain" often are not made with mostly whole grains. Check the ingredient list to make sure that a whole grain is listed first!
- ▶ **Watch out for added sugar.** There is a lot of sugar hiding in breakfast cereals, flavored yogurt, cookies, breakfast bars, and other packaged foods. Choose foods and drinks without sugar as one of the first 3 ingredients. Remember sugar comes in different forms: corn syrup, dextrose, fructose . . . they are all just sugar!

Optional sidebar:

### ▶ Examples of Ready-to-Eat Cereals With High Fiber or Low Sugar

Product	Fiber (grams per serving)	Sugar (grams per serving)
Chex, wheat	5g fiber	5g sugar
Cheerios	3g fiber	1g sugar
Total	3g fiber	5g sugar
Wheaties	3g fiber	4g sugar

From L.W.Y. Cheung, H. Dart, S. Kalin, B. Otis, and S.L. Gortmaker, 2016, *Eat Well & Keep Moving*, 3rd ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics). Adapted, by permission, from *Food & Fun After School 2nd Edition Parent Communications*. ©2013 President and Fellows of Harvard College and YMCA of the USA.

(continued)

Optional e-mail message: Use this sample message to communicate with parents by e-mail (if available).

**Subject Line: Healthy Habits Power Tips—Go for Whole Grains**

Dear (insert school name and grade) Parents,

This week your children will explore the world of whole grains through the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* lesson Carb Smart. Our key messages will be the following:

- ▶ Whole grains are important because they help fill you up and make your body healthy.
- ▶ Eat whole grains (like whole-wheat bread, whole-wheat pasta, whole-wheat crackers, and brown rice) instead of refined grains (like white bread, muffins, pasta, and white rice) whenever possible.

Breakfast is a great time to try whole grains. Try whole-grain cereals, waffles, bread, or bagels. Whole-grain breads and cereals are packed with fiber, vitamins, minerals, and flavor. They keep you feeling full longer and can lower your risk for heart disease and diabetes.

You can help your family choose and enjoy whole grains by following these Healthy Habits Power Tips:

- ▶ **Read the nutrition label.** Choose 100% whole-grain or whole-wheat breads and cereals that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving and no more than 5 grams of sugar per serving.
- ▶ **Read the ingredient list.** Choose breads and cereals that list a whole grain first. Examples are whole wheat, barley, oats, rye, brown rice, whole cornmeal, and millet.
- ▶ **Watch out for misleading terms.** Foods that are marketed as “multi-grain,” “100% wheat,” “made with whole grains,” and “seven grain” often are not made with mostly whole grains. Check the ingredient list to make sure that a whole grain is listed first!
- ▶ **Watch out for added sugar.** There is a lot of sugar hiding in breakfast cereals, flavored yogurt, cookies, breakfast bars, and other packaged foods. Choose foods and drinks without sugar as one of the first 3 ingredients. Remember sugar comes in different forms: corn syrup, dextrose, fructose . . . they are all just sugar!

Want to learn more? For more information on staying carb smart with whole grains, click on [www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates.html](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates.html).

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