

Wholegrains

As part of 'Healthy Eating Week', we want to highlight the importance and benefits of wholegrains in your diet.

What are wholegrains?

A huge variety of cereal crops are grown for food throughout the world including wheat, rye, barley, oats and rice. Grains are the seeds of these cereal plants. The entire grain, or wholegrain, is made up of three elements:

- A fibre-rich outer layer – the bran
- A nutrient-packed inner layer – the germ
- A central starchy part – the endosperm

During the milling process, the bran and the germ are often removed to make a whiter cereal.

Make a list of foods you eat that are wholegrains. You can check them against our list on the next page.

What nutrients do wholegrains contain?

Most of the goodness in grains is in the outer bran layer and in the germ of the seed so wholegrains can contain up to 75% more nutrients than refined cereals. Wholegrains provide:

- Fibre
- B vitamins and folic acid
- Essential fatty acids (omega 3 fats)
- Protein
- Antioxidants including Vitamin E and selenium
- Micronutrients like copper and magnesium
- Other parts of the plant which may have health benefits

What benefits do wholegrains have for our bodies?

Research suggests that:

- The risk of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes may be up to 30% lower in people who regularly eat wholegrains as part of a low-fat diet and healthy lifestyle.
- The risk of developing some forms of cancer of the digestive system, such as bowel cancer, may be reduced with higher intakes of wholegrains. Some of the fibre in wholegrains moves food along more quickly and easily, reducing the time harmful substances are in contact with the gut wall.



- Some of the fibre provides a food source for 'friendly' gut bacteria, helping them to increase and produce substances which are thought to protect the gut wall, such as short chain fatty acids.
- Wholegrains may help in maintaining a healthy body weight over time as part of a healthy diet and lifestyle.
- Wholegrains are usually low in fat but rich in fibre and starchy carbohydrate and often have a low glycaemic index. This means they provide a slow release of carbohydrate into the blood which, together with the fibre content, may help you feel full for longer, aiding snack control and appetite.
- Most cereal foods eaten in the UK are refined and our intake of wholegrain is very low. Surveys show that 95% of adults don't eat enough wholegrains and nearly one in three of us eat none at all.

Type of food	Wholegrain varieties	Portion size =1 serving	How to use
Breakfast cereal	Whole oats including rolled oats and oatmeal, whole-wheat cereals such as Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, bran flakes, puffed wholegrains, wholegrain muesli and wholegrain cereal bars	One tablespoon uncooked oats, three tablespoons of wholegrain cereal	With milk or yoghurt or fruit for breakfast or as a snack, as a topping for crumbles. Avoid those with added sugar or salt
Bread and crackers	Wholemeal, granary, wheatgerm, wholegrain with multigrain, seeded, mixed grain, soya, linseed, rye (pumpernickel, pitta, whole wheat crackers and rye crispbread	One medium slice of bread, ½ wholemeal tortilla, ½ wholemeal pitta, two rye crispbread, two oatcakes	
Flour	Wholemeal, wheatgerm, buckwheat, unrefined rye, barley, oatmeal, and oat flour	n/a	In baking or recipes in place of white flour or mixed half and half
Meals	Brown rice, wholewheat pasta, whole barley, bulgur (cracked) wheat, quinoa, and barley (not pearl)	Two to three heaped tablespoons cooked brown rice or pasta	With casseroles, curries, sauces, in soups and salads
Snacks	Wholegrain cereal bars, oat cakes, wholegrain rice cakes, popcorn (plain), wholemeal scone and wholegrain breakfast cereals	Half scone, two oatcakes, two to three cups or individual bag of plain popcorn	In place of sweets, crisps and savoury snacks, cream crackers or sweet biscuits

