

# Get on the Grain Train

**DIETARY  
GUIDELINES  
FOR AMERICANS**

"Do I eat enough grains?"



"How many **WHOLE** grains do I eat?"



"What **ARE** grains, anyway?"

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, corn, or another cereal is a grain product. Bread, pasta, oatmeal, cornflakes, and grits are all grain products. Check the "Grains You Eat" section to see how many different grain products you eat.

How many boxes did you check? You have many choices when it comes to eating grains. Vary your choices of grain products from day to day and get the number of servings that are right for you. See page 2 to find how many servings you need daily.

## Whole and refined grains— What are they?

There are two main types of grain products: whole and refined.

*Whole grains* contain the entire grain kernel—the bran, germ, and endosperm. (See the whole grain kernel graphic.) Examples include whole-wheat flour, bulgur, oatmeal, rye bread, whole cornmeal, and brown rice.

## Putting the Guidelines into Practice

May 2002

Center for  
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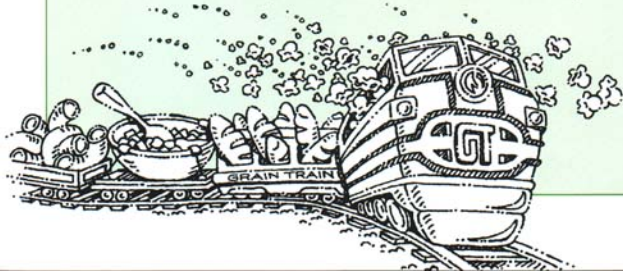
## Grains you eat

Check each of the following foods that you typically eat. They are all grain products.

- |  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bagels            | <input type="checkbox"/> Couscous        | <input type="checkbox"/> Oatmeal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Spaghetti, macaroni, and other pasta |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barley            | <input type="checkbox"/> Crackers        | <input type="checkbox"/> Pancakes and waffles | <input type="checkbox"/> Taco shells                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bread             | <input type="checkbox"/> English muffins | <input type="checkbox"/> Pita bread           | <input type="checkbox"/> Tortillas                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast cereal  | <input type="checkbox"/> Graham crackers | <input type="checkbox"/> Popcorn              | <input type="checkbox"/> Tortilla and corn chips              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulgur            | <input type="checkbox"/> Grits           | <input type="checkbox"/> Pretzels             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cakes and cookies | <input type="checkbox"/> Muffins         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rice                 |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cornbread         | <input type="checkbox"/> Noodles         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rolls and buns       |   |

\_\_\_\_\_ Add your favorites

\_\_\_\_\_ Add your favorites



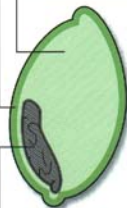
## Whole grain kernel

### Bran

"Outer shell" protects seed  
Fiber, B vitamins, trace  
minerals

### Endosperm

Provides energy  
Carbohydrates, protein



### Germ

Nourishment for the seed  
Antioxidants, vitamin E,  
B vitamins

### Especially for women

Women who could become pregnant are advised to eat foods fortified with folic acid or take a folic acid supplement—in addition to consuming folate-rich foods—to reduce risk of some serious birth defects. Folic acid is added to enriched grains. A few whole-grain foods, such as ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, contain added folic acid as well. Read the ingredient list to find out if folic acid and other nutrients have been added. A health care provider can help you choose foods or a supplement to ensure that you get enough.

*Refined grains* have been milled—the bran and germ are removed. This process also removes much of the B vitamins, iron, and dietary fiber. Some examples of refined grains are wheat flour, enriched bread, and white rice. Some refined grains are *enriched*. This means certain B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid) and iron are added back after processing. Fiber is not added back to most enriched grains.

### What's so great about grains?

Many people around the world use grains as a staple. In the United States, grains form the base of the Food Guide Pyramid and help form the foundation of a nutritious diet. Grains are great because:

- They provide vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates (starch and dietary fiber), and other substances important for health.
- Whole grains, as part of a healthful eating pattern, may help protect you against many chronic diseases.
- Fiber-containing foods, such as whole grains (and many fruits and vegetables), promote proper bowel function.
- Fiber-containing foods also help provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories.

Grains differ in their nutrient content, so it's important to choose a variety daily. While whole grains are good sources of fiber, refined grains are not.

Fiber is best obtained from foods rather than from fiber supplements. This is because foods provide many different types of fiber and other protective substances. Use the Nutrition Facts label on food packages to help you choose grains that are good sources of fiber.



### How many servings of grains do you need each day?

The Food Guide Pyramid recommends a range of servings (6-11) for the Grains group. The amount that is right for you depends on your calorie needs. Almost everyone should have at least 6 servings daily—several should be whole grains. People with high calorie needs, such as teen boys and active men, need 11 servings daily. Box 1 shows how many you may need.



#### Box 1. How many Pyramid servings do you need each day?

For	Calorie level	Number of grain servings recommended
Children ages 2 to 6, women, some older adults	1,600	6
Older children, teen girls, active women, most men	2,200	9
Teen boys, active men	2,800	11

### What counts as a serving?

A serving is the standard amount used to help give advice about how much to eat. A portion is the amount you choose to eat. Portions and servings are not always the same. A portion could be more than or less than a Pyramid-size serving. For instance, a Pyramid serving of cooked pasta is  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. A 1-cup portion of pasta equals 2 Pyramid servings. Box 2 lists examples of what counts as 1 Pyramid serving of grains.

You might be surprised at the number of grain servings you eat each day—they add up quickly. For example, a sandwich made with 2 slices of bread counts as 2 servings. The number of servings you eat at one time does not matter, as long as the total for the day adds up to the amount that is right for you.

To see how easy it is to fit in the recommended number of grain servings, look at the sample below. It contains 9 Pyramid servings of grains. Remember, the number of servings that are right for you may be more or less depending on your calorie needs. Notice that three grains in the sample are in bold print. These are whole grains.

#### Sample: Grains in 1 day's meals

Grains should fit into a 2,200-calorie meal plan.  
Whole grains are in bold print.

#### Breakfast:

1 cup <b>whole-wheat flakes</b>	1
½ English muffin	1

#### Lunch:

1 turkey sandwich (with 2 slices <b>whole-wheat bread</b> )	2
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#### Afternoon snack:

9 3-ring pretzels	1
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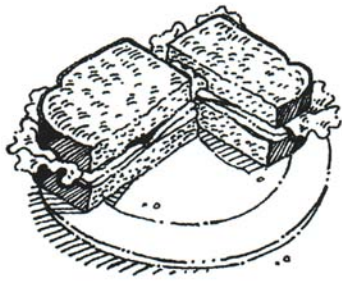
#### Dinner:

1 cup white rice	2
1 dinner roll	1

#### Evening snack:

3 cups <b>popcorn</b> , popped	1
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**Total Pyramid grain servings** 9



### Box 2. What counts as 1 Food Guide Pyramid serving?

#### Whole-grain choices

1 slice whole-grain bread (such as whole-wheat bread)  
About 1 cup (1 ounce) ready-to-eat, whole-grain cereal (such as wheat flakes)  
½ cup cooked brown rice  
5-6 whole-grain crackers  
3 cups popped popcorn

#### Enriched choices

1 slice white bread  
1 small white roll  
½ cup cooked white rice or pasta  
9 3-ring pretzels  
1 4-inch pancake  
1 7-inch flour tortilla

### How do you know if a grain product is a whole grain?

Read the ingredient list on the food label. For many whole-grain products, the words "whole" or "whole grain" will appear before the grain ingredient's name. The whole grain should be the first ingredient listed. Wheat flour, enriched flour, and degerminated cornmeal are *not* whole grains. Box 3 lists some ingredients that are whole grains. Another tip for finding whole-grain products is to look for the whole-grain health claim—"Diets rich in whole-grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may help reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers"—on food product labels. Foods that bear the whole-grain health claim must:

- Contain 51 percent or more whole grains by weight
- Be low in fat.



### Box 3. To increase your intake of whole grains

Choose foods that name one of the following ingredients first on the label's ingredient list. These are all whole grains.

brown rice	oatmeal	whole-grain corn	whole wheat
bulgur	pearl barley	whole oats	wild rice
graham flour	popcorn	whole rye	

Try these tips for ways to include a variety of whole grains.

- Try a snack mix made from ready-to-eat, whole-grain cereals.
- Choose a whole-grain (whole-wheat or oatmeal) muffin.
- Use whole-grain bread or cracker crumbs in a meatloaf.
- Try brown rice stuffing (cooked brown rice, onion, celery, and seasonings) in baked green peppers or tomatoes.
- Choose cookies made with some whole-grain flour or oatmeal.
- Try a whole-grain snack chip, such as baked tortilla chips.
- For a change, try brown rice or whole-wheat pasta.
- Use whole grains in mixed dishes, such as pearl barley in vegetable soup and bulgur in casseroles or salads.

**Did you know?**

- Most grain products, including whole grains, are low in fat, *unless fat is added* in processing, in preparation, or at the table. For example, English muffins and bagels are low in fat, while cookies, pastries, and croissants tend to be rich in fat.
- Color is not an indication of whole grain. Bread can be brown because of molasses or other ingredients, not necessarily because it contains whole grains.
- Food products labeled with the words "multi-grain," "stone-ground," "100% wheat," "cracked wheat," "seven-grain," or "bran" are usually not whole-grain products.
- Some processed foods such as rye or whole-wheat crackers and some ready-to-eat cereals (e.g., whole-wheat flakes) are whole grains.
- You can tell how much fiber is in a food by checking the Percent Daily Value on the Nutrition Facts label.

**The Bottom Line**

- Build a healthy base by making a variety of grain products the foundation of your diet.
- Include several servings of whole-grain foods daily.
- Aim to get the amount of grains you need based on your calorie needs. Check Box 1 again to see how many servings are right for you.

**Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

The Dietary Guidelines offer sound advice that will help to promote your health and reduce your risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis.

The 10 Guidelines are grouped into the ABC's of nutrition:

**A: Aim for fitness**

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day.

**B: Build a healthy base**

- Let the Pyramid guide your food choices.
- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Keep food safe to eat.

**C: Choose sensibly**

- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.



To order Dietary Guidelines publications, call 888-878-3256. Ask for the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (40-page bulletin, \$4.75 per copy) or *Using the Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (5-panel brochure, \$5.00 per copy).

You can also find out more about the Guidelines and download these publications by visiting USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion website at [www.cnpp.usda.gov](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov).



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