

WHOLE GRAINS

By Maria Oldham

What are they, exactly?



Whole Grains, Defined

A grain is considered a whole grain when it contains the entire grain seed: the bran (the fibrous outer layer), endosperm (the starchy interior layer), and germ (the seed’s reproductive kernel). In contrast, **refined grains** (e.g., white flour, white bread, white rice) are milled, a process that removes the bran and germ and pulverizes the endosperm.

Then and Now

At one time, all of the grains people ate were whole grains—they came directly from the stalk, packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other essential nutrients. Today’s process of refining wheat strips the most important ingredients from the grain. That’s why a healthy amount of whole grains can be helpful to our diet.

Where can I find them?

You can make sure a product labeled “whole grain” is *really* whole grain by looking at the first few ingredients. Do they include the word “whole”? If so, it’s probably a safe bet. You can also look for The Whole Grain Council’s yellow-gold “Whole Grain Stamp.”

What can whole grains do for me?

Whole grains include a variety of important nutrients, including protein, fiber, iron, magnesium, phosphorous, zinc, copper, manganese, selenium and B vitamins. All play an essential role in our body’s everyday functions. These nutrients help absorb calcium, maintain a strong immune system, transmit nerve impulses, produce melanin, digest food, regulate body temperature, blood pressure, thyroid function, and heart rate, and maintain healthy skin, hair and muscles. Whole grains have also been shown to reduce the risk of stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Common Whole Grains

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Amaranth* | Millet* |
| Barley | Oats* |
| Rice* | Quinoa* |
| (both brown & colored) | Rye |
| Buckwheat* | Sorghum* |
| Corn* | (also called milo) |

*gluten free

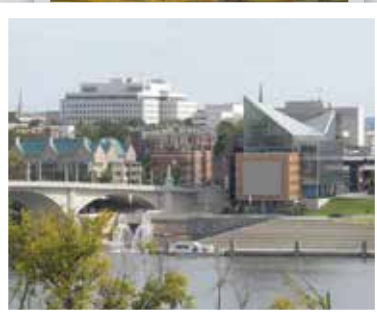


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