Whole Lot of Grains

Whole grains and products made with whole grains contain all the parts and naturally-occurring nutrients of the grain seed. This includes the entire grain kernel – the bran, germ, and endosperm. Refined grains have been milled in a process that removes the bran, germ, and dietary fiber, iron, and B vitamins. Many refined grains are enriched, or have the B vitamins and iron added back. You and your children should be looking for the words “whole grain” in the ingredients list when you buy grain products.

The following grains, when consumed in a form including the bran, germ and endosperm, are examples of generally accepted whole grain foods and flours:

- Amaranth
- Barley
- Buckwheat
- Corn, including whole cornmeal and popcorn
- Oats, including oatmeal
- Quinoa
- Brown rice
- Rye
- Wheat, including varieties like spelt, cracked wheat, and wheat berries

Benefits of Whole Grains

Studies show that eating whole grains instead of refined grains lowers the risk of many chronic diseases. While benefits are most pronounced for those consuming 3 servings daily, some studies show health benefits from as little as one serving daily. This shows how every whole grain in you and your children’s diets can help improve your health! Below are some health benefits of whole grains:

- Reduced risk of having a stroke
- Reduce risk of having type II diabetes
- Reduced risk of heart disease
- Better weight maintenance
- Healthier blood pressure levels

Important Nutrients

Grains are important sources of many nutrients, including dietary fiber, several B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, and folate), and minerals (iron, magnesium, and selenium).
• Dietary fiber helps reduce blood cholesterol levels and may lower the risk of heart disease. It also helps to relieve constipation and diverticulosis. Fiber-rich foods help provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories.
• B vitamins play a key role in metabolism and help the body release energy from protein, fat, and carbohydrates. B vitamins are also essential for a healthy nervous system.
• Folate, another B vitamin, helps the body to form red blood cells.

What’s a Serving
The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that all adults eat at least half their grains as whole grains; that are at least 3 to 5 servings of whole grains. Your children also need 2 to 3 servings or more of whole grains daily. A great way to incorporate more whole grains into your family’s diet is to include some source of whole grains at every meal. To meet the 3 serving requirement of whole grains, you can include 1 serving at each meal.

A serving of whole grains is defined as any of the following:
- ½ cup cooked 100% whole-grain rice or pasta
- ½ cup cooked hot cereal, such as oatmeal
- 1 slice 100% whole grain bread
- 1 very small (1 oz.) 100% whole grain muffin
- 1 cup 100% whole grain ready-to-eat cereal

Ways to Enjoy Whole Grains
- Substitute whole wheat flour for white flour in regular recipes for cookies, muffins, bread, and pancakes
- Add a ½ cup cooked bulgur, wild rice, or barley to bread stuffing
- Add a half cup of cooked brown rice or barley to your soup
- Add ¾ cup uncooked oats to each pound ground beef or turkey when making burgers or meatloaf
- Stir a handful of oats into yogurt for instant crunch
- Buy whole grain pasta, or one that blends whole grains with white flour
- Try whole grain pita bread
- Look for cereals made with grains like kamut, buckwheat or spelt.
- Look for snack foods with “100% whole grains” on the package
- Encourage your children to snack on popcorn

Set a good example for your children by eating whole grains at meals and snacks. Also, let children select and help prepare a whole grain side dish. Teach older children to read the ingredient list on cereals or snack food packages and choose those with whole grains. Children will understand the importance of eating whole grains the more you involve them in food shopping and preparation.

Source:  (www.mypyramid.gov )