

# VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute

## THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT WHOLE GRAINS

Choosing whole-grain foods can be confusing. Plenty of food products have “wheat” or “made with whole grains” on the label. These sound healthy, but they may not be as healthy as they appear. Before you fill your shopping cart with pasta, bread and other grains, make sure you know the whole story.

### Refined grains vs. whole grains

Refined grains have gone through a milling process where the outer layers of the seeds have been removed, changing their texture and extending their shelf life. Refined grains can have some nutrients added back through enrichment, but other important nutrients, such as fiber, aren't put back.

Whole grains don't go through this milling process. The outer layers of the seeds are kept intact, keeping the “whole” grain and the extra nutrients along with it. Whole grains are an important source of fiber, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients.

Foods like whole-grain bread or pasta contain ground whole grains, which means the whole grains have been ground into flour. This is better for you than refined grains, but the best types of grains are whole grains that are fully intact.

### Don't be fooled by labels

Manufacturers can use “made with whole grains” on the label even if there's only a tiny fraction of whole grains in a product. Choose “100 percent whole grains” instead. Or, check the label to see if whole grains are among the first few ingredients listed.

A product labeled as “wheat” tells you that it's made from wheat. But it could be enriched wheat flour, which is a type of refined flour. Instead, look for “whole-wheat flour” in the ingredients.

When you see “multigrain” on a label, this is not an indicator of whole grains. It simply means the product is made from a number of different grains, which could be refined or whole grain. Again, check the ingredients for whole grains.

### Healthy whole grains

Whole grains are digested slowly, which helps you feel full longer and regulate blood sugar levels. Eating a diet that's focused on plant-based foods and whole grains can help you control your weight, reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers.<sup>1</sup> Plus, the earthy, nutty flavors and chewy textures of whole grains add a new dimension to your menu. Explore a variety of whole grains like barley, brown or wild rice, buckwheat, bulgur (cracked wheat), millet, oats, popcorn and quinoa.

### Source:

1. Mayo Clinic. “Whole grains: Hearty options for a healthy diet.” Web (last reviewed/updated July 8, 2017).

This is general health information and not medical advice or services. You should consult your doctor for medical advice or services, including seeking advice prior to undertaking a new diet or exercise program.

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