



Heart-Healthy Tips: Eat More Whole Grains

Did you know that eating a diet high in soluble fiber – which is found in many whole grain foods – can help reduce your cholesterol? These tips from MyPyramid.gov will help you eat more whole grains as part of your heart-healthy diet. Learn more about healthy eating and cholesterol on the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program web site at www.healthy-firefighter.org.

At Meals:

- ▶ Substitute a whole-grain product for a refined product – such as eating whole-wheat bread instead of white bread or brown rice instead of white rice. It’s important to substitute the whole-grain product for the refined one, rather than adding the whole-grain product.
- ▶ Try brown rice or whole-wheat pasta. Stuff brown rice in baked green peppers or tomatoes and use whole-wheat macaroni in macaroni and cheese.
- ▶ Use whole grains in mixed dishes, such as barley in vegetable soup or stews and bulgur wheat in casseroles or stir-fries.
- ▶ Create a whole-grain pilaf with a mixture of barley, wild rice, brown rice, broth, and spices. For a special touch, stir in toasted nuts or chopped dried fruit.
- ▶ Substitute whole-wheat or oat flour for up to half of the flour in pancake, waffle, muffin, or other flour-based recipes. They may need a bit more leavening.
- ▶ Use whole-grain bread or cracker crumbs in meatloaf.
- ▶ Try rolled oats or a crushed, unsweetened whole-grain cereal as breading for baked chicken, fish, veal cutlets, or eggplant parmesan.
- ▶ Try an unsweetened, whole-grain, ready-to-eat cereal as croutons in salad or in place of crackers with soup.
- ▶ Freeze leftover cooked brown rice, bulgur, or barley. Heat and serve it later as a quick side dish.

As Snacks:

- ▶ Snack on ready-to-eat, whole-grain cereals such as toasted oat cereal.
- ▶ Use whole-grain flour or oatmeal when making cookies or other baked treats.
- ▶ Try a whole-grain snack chip, such as baked tortilla chips.
- ▶ Popcorn, a whole grain, can be a healthy snack with little or no added salt and butter.

Find more health and wellness tips and resources for first responders at www.healthy-firefighter.org.

What to Look for on the Food Label:

- ▶ Choose foods that name one of the following whole-grain ingredients first on the label's ingredient list:
 - ▶ brown rice
 - ▶ bulgur
 - ▶ graham flour
 - ▶ oatmeal
 - ▶ whole-grain
 - ▶ corn
 - ▶ whole oats
 - ▶ whole rye
 - ▶ whole wheat
 - ▶ wild rice
- ▶ Foods labeled with the words “multi-grain,” “stone-ground,” “100% wheat,” “cracked wheat,” “seven-grain,” or “bran” are usually not whole-grain products.
- ▶ Color is not an indication of a whole grain. Bread can be brown because of molasses or other added ingredients. Read the ingredient list to see if it is a whole grain.
- ▶ Use the Nutrition Facts label and choose products with a higher percent daily value (%DV) for fiber – the %DV for fiber is a good clue to the amount of whole grain in the product.
- ▶ Read the food label's ingredient list. Look for terms that indicate added sugars (sucrose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, and molasses) and oils (partially hydrogenated vegetable oils) that add extra calories. Choose foods with fewer added sugars, fats, or oils.
- ▶ Most sodium in the food supply comes from packaged foods. Similar packaged foods can vary widely in sodium content, including breads. Use the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods with a lower %DV for sodium. Foods with less than 140 mg sodium per serving can be labeled as low sodium foods. Claims such as “low in sodium” or “very low in sodium” on the front of the food label can help you identify foods that contain less salt (or sodium).

Whole-Grain Tips for Children:

- ▶ Set a good example for children by eating whole grains with meals or as snacks.
- ▶ 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 at the top of the list.

Source: United States Department of Agriculture