

Eating more Whole grains

Is an easy way to be on track to good health

Grains have been for thousands of years, serving as a vital food source for humans. Today, foods made with whole grains are associated with significant health benefits.

"People believe that whole grains are only a good source of fiber, and this only will help them to have better digestion. The fact is that besides fiber, foods made with whole grains are important sources of nutrients including important minerals, and vitamins. Additional health-promoting components and phytochemicals found in whole grains are believed to play a key role in reducing risk of disease," says Joanne Slavin, a nutrition professor specializing in whole grain foods at the University of Minnesota.

"The combination of the components of whole grains such as phytoestrogens, antioxidants, polyphenols and physiologically active components that have functional benefits for health is what provides protection against disease," says Slavin. "Furthermore, some of these phytonutrients can not be obtained by eating only fruits and vegetables."

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends eating at least three servings of whole-grain products per day. This recommendation is based on research that links the greatest health benefits to three daily servings of whole grain foods.

The whole grains are the entire seed, also known as the nucleus, consists of three key parts: the bran, germ and endosperm.

Most often, that whole grains are milled into flour and used to make or as an ingredient of breads, cereals, pasta, crackers and other foods such as oatmeal, brown rice, barley. Among the



most popular grains are brown rice, corn, popcorn, rye, barley, wild rice, buckwheat, burgol (cracked wheat), millet, quinoa and sorghum.

Considering the changing consumer preferences, some prepared foods such as breads and pasta, have a nice texture, some of the grains are refined. When a grain is refined, most of the bran and germ it eliminates, vitamins B and E, unsaturated fat and about 75 percent of the phytonutrients, resulting in loss of fiber. To compensate for this loss, and by law, many products are fortified with folic acid, vitamins and minerals in the same levels found naturally in whole grains.

With awareness and education, and greater market availability of whole-grain products easy to identify, consumers can easily reach its goal of whole grain consumption.

A diet rich in whole grains has been shown to reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

HEART DISEASE > The evidence demonstrates an association between consuming whole grains as part of a low-fat diet and a reduced risk of heart disease. Low fat diets rich in whole grain foods tend to decrease LDL cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol), triglycerides, and blood pressure, and increase HDL cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol).

DIABETES > The American Diabetes Association recognizes the role of whole grains and fiber in reducing the risk of

diabetes and maintenance of blood glucose levels. Evidence from studies suggests improved blood glucose control in people with diabetes and, in non-diabetic individuals, whole grains may lower fasting insulin levels and decrease insulin resistance.

CANCER> Whole-grains foods appear to be associated with a reduced risk of a number of gastrointestinal cancers as well as several hormone-dependent cancers risk through different mechanisms. The fibers and certain starches found in whole grains ferment in the colon and help to improve the gastrointestinal health. Whole-grains foods also contain antioxidants that help protect the body against oxidative damage. Some scientists believe that whole grains have substances that can affect hormone levels and possibly decrease the risk of hormone-related cancer such as breast, cervical, ovarian and prostate cancers.

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT> Emerging evidence suggests that whole grain intake contribute to maintaining a healthy weight. Weight-Control Studies show that people who include whole grains as part of a healthful diet are more satisfied for longer periods of time, which may support their weight management.

Eating more whole grains is an easy way to make your diet healthier.

HOW TO FIND WHOLE GRAINS

Consumers often believe they can identify whole grain products by name, color, or fiber content. The color of the product does not indicate that it is whole grain. Many loaves are brown because molasses or coloring added. Many whole grain products such as cereals, are light in color.

Despite popular belief, whole grain foods are not dry or granulated, some may be more dense and have a pleasant "nut" flavor. The nutrition labels are very helpful to correctly identify foods that qualify as whole grain. If a product contains whole grains, it will be included in the list of ingredients on the nutrition label the term "whole grain".