

# Whole Grains



## *Real-Life Challenges...* And how to overcome them

***We don't get to choose which foods are provided to children.***

Contact whoever is responsible for food purchasing and request that snacks be whole grain. Check out **Snack Sense** for a list of ideas to get your started.

***Whole grain products are more expensive.***

Most often, this is not the case. Many popular snack items, like Goldfish, English muffins, and tortillas, are now available in whole grain for the same price.

***Kids seem reluctant to try new, healthy foods.***

Use fun taste tests to understand kids' preferences and identify new items that kids enjoy to add to your regular menu (see examples below).

***Staff don't see what they eat as relevant to their job or to children's healthy eating.***

Teach staff about the importance of role modeling and involve them in taste testing.

***Staff in charge of buying food don't know what ingredients to look for on labels.***

Teach staff to look for products with whole grains listed first on the ingredient label. Examples of whole grains are whole wheat, oats, and barley.



## Check out these real-life success stories!

One afterschool program was able to swap out snacks made with refined grains and replace them with whole grain, healthier options. The new foods tasted great and provided children with additional fiber and nutrients.

**New ideas included:**

- Whole wheat pitas and tortillas
- Granola
- Whole grain mini bagels
- Popcorn
- Whole grain Goldfish crackers

Another program saw the opportunity to review current menu items and involve kids in developing a new menu.

They let kids vote each time they tried a new snack and tallied their responses to track new favorites!

# The Scoop on Whole Grains

Did you know that eating a diet rich in whole grains can lower your risk for heart disease and diabetes? Whole grains contain fiber, vitamin E, and healthy fats. They help keep your blood sugar steady and your arteries clear. Whole grains also make you feel full longer. Refined “white” flour and sugar do not have these nutrients or health benefits. Eat whole grain products instead of refined ones whenever possible. You should also avoid the “empty calories” of added sugars. They offer no benefit other than energy.

- Try to serve foods made with whole grains (like whole wheat, oats, barley, brown rice and popcorn), which are higher in fiber and nutrients than refined grains (like white rice, white bread and cornflakes).
- Refined grains, such as white rice or white flour, have both the bran and germ removed from the grain. Although vitamins and minerals are added back into refined grains after the milling process, they still don’t have as many nutrients as whole grains do, and they don’t provide as much fiber.
- Look at the ingredient list! Aim for products that list a whole grain first and contain no added sugar. A good rule of thumb is to choose products with at least 3 grams of fiber and no more than 5 grams of sugar.



## Limit these snack foods:

- Sweetened cereals like Frosted Flakes, Fruit Loops and Cinnamon Toast Crunch
- White bread and tortillas
- White rice, potatoes and “instant” grains
- Cookies, cakes and candies

## Did you know?

- Whole grains are an important part of healthy snacking. Pair them with a fruit or vegetable for a well-rounded snack.
- Try to aim for snacks for kids that have between 100-200 calories. Nutrition labels can help!

## Want to know more?

### Check out these other resources:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates.html>

Harvard School of Public Health publishes an online nutrition news and resource center.

<http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org>

The Whole Grains Council helps consumers find whole grain foods and understand their health benefits.

<http://mypyramid.gov/pyramid/grains.html>

This section of the Food Guide Pyramid gives specific information on grains, and can be tailored for individual needs.

[http://www.foodplay.com/downloads/FreeMaterials/Teachers/celebration\\_guide.pdf](http://www.foodplay.com/downloads/FreeMaterials/Teachers/celebration_guide.pdf)

Planning healthy celebrations can be particularly challenging. Foodplay offers some great suggestions.

## Examples of one serving of whole grains

- 1 slice of whole-grain bread
- 1/2 whole-grain English muffin, bagel or bun
- 1 ounce of ready-to-eat whole-grain cereal
- 1/2 cup (cooked) oatmeal, brown rice, or whole-wheat pasta
- 5-6 whole-grain crackers
- 3 cups of popped popcorn