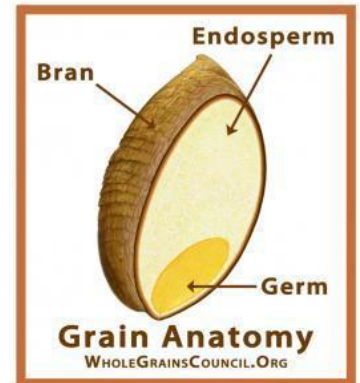


### Article: Whole Grains

Eating right doesn't have to be a difficult task! The Dietary Guidelines for Americans sets recommendations to help us eat a balanced diet. One of the recommendations is to **make half of your grains whole**. This means that out of all of the grain products you eat in a day, half of them should be whole grains instead of refined grains.

Why are whole grains so important? Let's look at the differences between whole and refined grains:

**Whole grains** are grains that contain the entire grain kernel- the bran coating, the endosperm and the germ. 100% of the kernel must be present in a product in order to be called a "whole grain." It will still be called a whole grain if it is processed (say, to create a cereal product), as long as the end product retains all three parts of the kernel. The whole kernel contains many vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, fiber and protein.



**Refined grains** have removed the bran and germ parts of the kernel in processing, leaving only the endosperm. Examples of this include white rice and products made from white refined flour, including white bread and white pasta. Removing the bran and germ from the kernel removes much of the fiber, iron, B vitamins and antioxidants. Iron and some of the B vitamins can be added back in during processing to make it an "enriched grain." However, not all of the nutrients lost during processing can be added back in, including fiber. This means that refined grains have less fiber than whole grains.

Many studies have shown that whole grains are beneficial to our health. The Whole Grains Counsel reports that whole grains help to reduce stroke risk by 30-35%, reduce diabetes risk by 21-30%, reduce heart disease risk by 25-28%, and help us to maintain our weight better than a diet that is higher in refined grains. A diet rich in whole grain products can also reduce the risk of asthma, maintain the health of our carotid arteries, reduce inflammatory disease risk, lower the risk for colorectal cancer, achieve healthier blood pressure level, and promote healthier gum and dental health. Making at least half of your grains whole can help you to achieve these health benefits.

### Easy ways to increase your whole grain intake

When baking, substitute ½ of the white flour in a recipe with whole grain flour.

Try new recipes with whole grains, such as quinoa, teff, wheat berries, barley, brown rice, wild rice, bulgur and millet. Eat oats. Add them to yogurt, eat oatmeal for breakfast, or when baking, replace 1/3 of the flour in a recipe with oats.

Use whole grain bread. Whole wheat, oatnut, and some multi-grain breads (read the label!) are whole grains.

Use whole grain pasta. Or, if you find whole wheat pasta too grainy, make half whole grain pasta and half white pasta together. Some brands make pasta with ½ whole grain and ½ enriched flour- this is also a good option.

Snack on rice cakes made from whole grain brown rice, or popcorn (which is always a whole grain!).

Read food labels on prepared products, such as cereals, crackers and granola bars. Choose whole grain products over enriched products to use as staples.

### What to look for on the label

When looking for a whole grain product, it is important to read the ingredient list on the nutrition facts panel. The ingredients are listed by weight, meaning that the first ingredient listed is the ingredient that makes up most of the product. **When reading the ingredient list, it should say "whole" as the first word.**

Or, you can look for the Whole Grain Stamp to quickly ensure it's a whole grain product (see right).



Packaging can make it tricky to determine if a product is a whole grain. A cracker package may say "made with 5 g of whole grain" on the front panel. However, when reading the nutrition label, the first ingredient listed is "enriched flour," which tells us that it is not truly a whole grain product. Pass this cracker product up and look for one that says "whole" as the first ingredient instead.

**Recipes featuring Whole Grains**

**Oatmeal Muffins To Go-** cited from chocolatecoveredkatie.com  
Yields 24 muffins

**Ingredients**

5 cups rolled oats  
1 tsp salt  
5 Truvia packets  
2 ½ cups over-ripe mashed banana  
2 2/3 cups water  
¼ cup + 1 tbsp coconut oil  
2 ½ tsp vanilla extract  
Optional- 2/3 cup mini chocolate chips

**Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 375oF, and line 24 cupcake tins.  
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine all dry ingredients and stir well.  
3. In a separate bowl, combine and stir all wet ingredients, including banana.  
4. Mix wet into dry, then pour into the cupcake liners and bake for 20 minutes. Optional- broil for 1-2 minutes to get a crispier top.  
5. The muffins can be eaten right away or they can be frozen and reheated for a whole grain snack.

**Quinoa and Vegetable Soup-** cited from allrecipes.com

This recipe is a favorite in my house. It is easy to make with limited time- from start to finish it takes about 1 hour 15 minutes. Prepare vegetables the night before and use a Dutch oven\* to speed up the cooking time. This recipe has a large yield- you can freeze the leftovers to use as a quick meal for another night.

**Ingredients**

2 Tbsp olive oil  
2 Tbsp butter  
1 onion, chopped  
1 clove garlic, minced  
½ cup diced carrot  
½ cup chopped celery  
2 tbsp dried parsley  
1 tsp dried basil  
1 bay leaf  
1 pinch dried thyme  
2 (32 oz) cartons chicken broth  
1 (28 oz) can crushed tomatoes  
2 cups shredded cabbage  
1 (15 oz ) can light red kidney beans, drained  
½ cup quinoa  
½ cup grated parmesan cheese (optional)

**Directions**

1. Heat olive oil and butter in a large pot or Dutch oven\* over medium heat; cook and stir onion, garlic, carrot, and celery until softened, 5-10 minutes.  
2. Add parsley, basil, bay leaf, thyme, chicken broth, and tomatoes; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until heated through, 10 minutes.  
3. Stir cabbage, kidney beans, and quinoa into the soup. Cover and simmer until quinoa is tender, about 30 minutes.  
4. Garnish each serving with Parmesan cheese if desired.

**\*What's a Dutch oven?**

A Dutch oven is a thick-walled cooking pot with a lid. Often made from cast iron, it retains heat well, making it ideal for cooking soups and chilies. It can be used on the stovetop, in the oven, and even outside in a campfire!

To learn more about whole grains, visit: [wholegrainscouncil.org](http://wholegrainscouncil.org) or [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)

**Nutrition Questions?**

I am Gwenda Hill, the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist at North Clinic. I am thrilled to be a part of the clinic, and am here to help you reach your nutrition goals. My background includes working with men, women and children focusing on a variety of nutritional concerns. I can help with sustainable weight loss solutions, healthy eating for a variety of health conditions, including: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, prediabetes, diseases of the GI tract (i.e. celiac disease, IBS, IBD, diverticulitis), child nutrition concerns, and maximizing athletic performance with nutrition.

If you would like an appointment to discuss any of the issues listed above or any other nutritional concerns, please ask your provider to submit a referral to the Nutritionist.