

# Food is



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## **Make a simple, healthy switch**

Grains take a prominent part in our diet. This is because different menu items we enjoy are made with them. A few examples include bread, cereal, pasta, crackers, tortillas, rice, and many more. We already eat grains in different forms. However, a simple, healthy change is to eat more whole grains. Grains can be broadly classified as whole grains and refined grains. If you are like most people, you are eating more refined grains than whole grains. Why does this matter?

Whole grains consist of three main parts. They are the bran, the endosperm, and the germ. The milling process produces refined grain. This makes grain fluffy, easy to chew and have a longer shelf life. This milling process is achieved by stripping off the bran and the germ layers of the grain. The bran contain a lot of fiber while the germ layer contains a lot of oil and protein. Therefore, refined grains do not have the fiber-rich bran. Also, they have lost the oil, and protein-rich germ layer. They have a longer shelf life but they are not as healthy as whole grains. Whole grains contain all of these nutrients and fiber that have been lost in the milling process that produces refined grains.

Many foods that are made with refined grains also have whole grain versions. So, to eat more whole grains is a simple change to make. The numerous health benefits associated with eating more whole grains is worth the change. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020 recommends you make at least half of the grains you consume per day whole grains. Most people eat excess refined grains and lower than recommended whole grains. The bran in whole grains is rich in B vitamins, phytochemicals, and other useful minerals such as iron, magnesium, zinc, and copper. To mitigate this nutrient loss, some nutrients are added back after the milling process however, fiber are not added back to refined grains. Eating whole grain will help you to eat more fiber, which serve many healthy functions such as:

- Feeling fuller with fewer calories for healthy weight
- Slowing the breakdown of starch into glucose, thereby maintaining a steady blood sugar
- Better digestion, bowel movement, and lower cholesterols
- Reducing the risk of heart attacks and stroke by preventing formation of clots

In simple terms, fiber from whole grains help you to have a healthy heart, better weight control and good digestion. Research has shown that eating whole grains instead of refined grains can decrease your risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, colorectal cancer, and diverticular disease. Essential minerals in the bran, help cells to have optimum function. The phytochemicals are useful in protecting against some cancers.

Examples of whole grains include brown rice, whole grain wheat, popcorn, buckwheat, oatmeal quinoa, whole grain barley, and many others. Bread, cereal, pasta, bagels, crackers and many other food can be made with either refined grains or whole grains. Any time you want to buy any of these common food items, look at the ingredient list and ensure it is made from whole grain. If it is truly whole grain, it will be written on the ingredient list as whole grain. People assume that when bread, tortillas or pasta have a dark brown color, it is from whole grain. Judging with color can be misleading. There are whole grains that are not dark in color.

### Action steps

- Swap your refined grain consumption with whole grain.
- Anytime you have the opportunity, choose whole grain.
- Cut back on desserts, sweets, and cakes as many of them are made from refined grains.
- Eat more whole grains as it can help you in preventing diseases or managing them better.
- Switching from refined grains to whole grains is an easy healthy switch to make. Choose whole grains for a healthy heart, reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and some cancers.