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## Make Half Your Grains Whole

The USDA recommends that half of your grains are whole grains. But what does that mean, and why should you do it? Let's look into it!

### What are grains?

Grains include bread, cereals, oatmeal, rice, grits – the list goes on and on. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends around six servings of grains each day for folks on an average 2,000 calorie diet. Each serving is about 1 to 2 ounces, depending on the specific food. More information on whole grain servings can be found at [MyPlate.com](http://MyPlate.com).



### Whole grains and refined grains

Time for a quick biology lesson! Whole grains have the entire grain kernel — the bran, germ, and endosperm. Refined grains have been milled, a process that removes the bran and germ leaving only the endosperm. This gives grains a finer texture and improves shelf life, but it also removes dietary fiber, iron, and many B vitamins. Some examples of refined grain products are white flour, corn grits, white bread, and white rice.

### Why are whole grains important?

Including whole grains as a part of your diet can help reduce blood cholesterol levels and lower the risk of heart disease. The fiber in whole grains can help to support healthy digestion, and helps you stay full longer. Examples of whole grains include whole-wheat flour, oatmeal, whole wheat bread, and brown rice.

## **Benefits of Enrichment**

When whole or refined grains are enriched, they provide a host of vitamins that support a healthy lifestyle. These vitamins include B vitamins that support metabolism and a healthy nervous system, and iron, a mineral that is needed to prevent anemia. Magnesium, used to build bones, and selenium, a support for your immune system, are important components of grains, too.

### **Easy way to increase whole grain consumption:**

- whole wheat pasta instead of regular pasta
- whole grain bread for toast or a sandwich
- oatmeal for breakfast
- low sodium popcorn
- brown rice instead of white rice

Remember, you don't have to eat all whole grain all the time. If you make half your grains whole, you will be off to a great start!

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