



Nutrition Facts

Grains of Truth:

How to read labels and packages of grain foods

Choosing whole grain foods is easy – if you know where to look. To get the whole grain goodness that your body craves, all you have to do is read labels and packages carefully. Here is a quick guide to the health claims and terms seen on grain foods.

NOTE: The color of a food does not necessarily indicate whether it is a whole grain. Some breads have caramel coloring added to make them look like whole grains. Some whole oats products, like hot and cold cereals, are very light in color.

HEALTH CLAIM:

“Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods that are low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risks of heart disease and certain cancers.”

If this statement is on a food package, it means that the food contains 51 percent or more **whole grains** by weight. It is approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

INGREDIENT LIST:

- Look for foods with the words **whole** or **whole grain** before the grain’s name in the ingredient list.
- At a minimum, look for foods that list a **whole grain** – such as wheat, rye, oats, corn, barley, or rice – as the **first ingredient**.
- Foods that list all **grains as 100% whole grain** will be the best sources of phytonutrients and antioxidants.

GRAIN DEFINITIONS:

Whole grains — give you the health benefits of all parts of the grain kernel, including:

- **Bran** – outer shell protects seed and contains fiber, B vitamin and mineral.
- **Endosperm** – main part of the seed contains carbohydrates and some protein.
- **Germ** – nourishment for seed contains antioxidants, vitamins E, and B.

Cracked wheat — is the whole grain kernel broken into coarse, medium or fine fragments. Foods made with cracked wheat may, or may not, include other whole grains. **100% wheat** just means that wheat is the only grain used in the product. It does not reveal whether the wheat is whole wheat or not.

Stone-ground is a technique—for grinding grains. It usually means that the grain is coarser and that the germ is intact. The bran portion may, or may not, be included.

Multigrain— refers only to the fact that more than one grain is used in the product recipe. The grains used may, or may not, be whole grains.

Organic — refers to a method of farming and processing foods. This has nothing to do with whether or not a product is made from whole grains.



Ask the Dietitian
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