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## What is a Whole Grain?



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Next time your kids want a snack, look to whole grains. They not only are nutritious but also delicious!

Whole grains contain three parts: the bran, the germ and the endosperm (refined grains only contain the endosperm). The bran and germ help keep your body healthy, your skin glowing and your hair shiny. Including whole grains as part of a healthy diet can help reduce the risk for heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

Barley, quinoa, oats, brown rice, or whole-grain pastas, breads and cereals are some whole-grain foods. When reading food labels, look for the words "whole grain." Also, choose products high in fiber with fewer added sugars.

You've got to be a savvy consumer when buying whole grains — multi-grain, stone-ground, 100 percent wheat, cracked wheat, seven-grain, and bran usually are not whole-grain foods. Color also is not a reliable way to pick a whole-grain product. Sometimes molasses or other added ingredients give a food that nice brown color.

There are many tasty kid-tested whole-grain snack options. Half of a whole-grain pita pocket stuffed with ricotta cheese and Granny Smith apple slices with a dash of cinnamon is a great small bite. Or, for kids to eat on the run, combine ½ cup ready-to-eat whole-grain cereal, dried fruit and nuts for an on-the-go snack.

Did you know that many schools serve whole-grain options? Guidelines that schools try to follow, include:

- Offering whole grains with at least 8 grams or more per serving.
- Buying products that include the FDA-approved whole-grain health claim on its packaging.
- Making sure that product ingredient lists state whole grains first.

Try swapping out refined grains and white breads and pastas for whole-grain varieties. To gradually introduce whole grains to your family, you can combine whole-grain foods and the refined grain foods they're used to until everyone's palate has adjusted to whole grains. Aim to make at least half of a day's grains whole grains.