

**Commodities Newsletter**

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**SNAP-Ed Program**  
MSU Extension Cass County  
120 N. Broadway  
Suite 209  
Cassopolis, MI 49031  
269-445-4438

**Nora Lee**  
Program Associate

For questions regarding the commodities, please call 269-445-0231.

This project has been partially funded with Federal funds from the USDA, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by way of the MI Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Family Nutrition Program (FNP) at Michigan State University. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income; it can help to buy nutritious foods for a better diet. FNP provides nutrition education to SNAP participants. To find out more, contact your local DHS office, check online at <http://www.mfia.state.mi.us/mars/index.asp>. In Michigan, you can also call the Center for Civil Justice Food Stamp Hotline (1-800-481-4989).

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## **The Nutrition Source** **Health Gains from Whole Grains**

*Harvard School of Public Health*

For millennia, the grains humans ate came straight from the stalk. That means they got a carbohydrate package rich in fiber, healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, plant enzymes, hormones, and hundreds of other phytochemicals. Even after we learned how to grind grain, we still got all of the goodness that grains pack in their three layers. Whole grains have a tough, fibrous outer layer called bran that protects the inside of the kernel. The interior contains mostly the starchy endosperm. Its job is to provide stored energy for the germ, the seed's reproductive kernel, which nestles inside the endosperm. The germ is rich in vitamins, minerals, and unsaturated oils.

The invention of industrialized roller mills in the late 19th century changed what we got from grains. Milling strips away the bran and germ, making the grain easier to chew, easier to digest and easier to keep without refrigeration (the healthy oils in the germ can turn rancid, giving the grain an off taste). Processing also pulverized the endosperm, turning it from a small, solid nugget into millions of minuscule particles. Refining wheat creates fluffy flour that makes light airy breads and pastries. But there's

a nutritional price to be paid. The process strips away more than half of wheat's B vitamins, 90% of the vitamin E, and virtually all of the fiber. It also makes the starch easily accessible to the body's starch-digesting enzymes.

A growing body of research shows that returning to whole grains and other less-processed sources of carbohydrates improves health in myriad ways.

### **What Whole Grains Can Do For You**

As researchers have begun to look more closely at carbohydrates and health, they are learning that the quality of the carbohydrates you eat is at least as important as the quantity. Most studies, including some from several different Harvard teams, show a connection between eating whole grains and better health.

### **Cardiovascular Disease**

Eating whole instead of refined grains substantially lowers total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL, or bad) cholesterol, triglycerides, and insulin levels. Any of these changes would be

expected to reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease. In the Harvard-based Nurses' Health Study, women who ate 2 to 3 servings of whole-grain products (mostly bread and breakfast cereals) each day were 30% less likely to have a heart attack or die from heart disease over a 10-year period than women who ate less than 1 serving per week. A recent meta-analysis of seven major studies showed that cardiovascular disease (heart attack, stroke, or the need for a procedure to bypass or open a clogged artery) was 21% less likely in people who ate 2.5 or more servings of whole grain foods a day compared with those who ate less than 2 servings a week.

### **Type 2 Diabetes**

In a study of more than 160,000 women whose health and dietary habits were followed for up to 18 years, those who averaged 2 to 3 servings of whole grains a day were 30% less likely to have developed type 2 diabetes than those who rarely ate whole grains. When the researchers combined these results with those of several other large studies, they found that eating an extra 2 servings of whole grains a day decreased the risk of type 2 diabetes by 21%.

### **Cancer**

The data on cancer are mixed, with some studies showing a protective effect and others showing none. A large, five-year study among nearly 500,000 men and women suggests that eating whole grains, but not dietary fiber, offers modest protection against colorectal cancer.

### **Digestive Health**

By keeping the stool soft and bulky, the fiber in whole grains helps prevent constipation, a common, costly, and aggravating problem. It also helps prevent diverticular disease (the development of tiny pouches inside the colon that are easily irritated and inflamed) by decreasing pressure in the intestines.

### **Staying Alive**

An intriguing report from the Iowa Women's Health Study linked whole-grain consumption

with fewer deaths from noncardiac, non-cancer causes. Compared with women who rarely or never ate whole-grain foods, those who had at least two or more servings a day were 30% less likely to have died from an inflammation-related condition over a 17-year period.

## **How Do Whole Grains Do This?**

Whole grains don't contain a magical nutrient that fights disease and improves health. It's the entire package—elements intact and working together—that's important.

The bran and fiber in whole grains make it more difficult for digestive enzymes to break down the starches into glucose. Soluble fiber helps lower cholesterol. Insoluble fiber helps move waste through the digestive tract. Fiber may also kindle the body's natural anticoagulants and so help prevent the formation of small blood clots that can trigger heart attacks or strokes. The collection of antioxidants prevents LDL cholesterol from reacting with oxygen. Some experts think this reaction is a key early step in the development of cholesterol-clogged arteries. Phytoestrogens (plant estrogens) found in whole grains may protect against some cancers. So might essential minerals, such as magnesium, selenium, copper, and manganese. These minerals may also help reduce the risk for heart disease and diabetes. And then there are the hundreds of substances that haven't yet been identified, some or many of which may play as-yet-undiscovered roles in health.

### **Examples of Whole Grains**

- Whole wheat berries, whole wheat bulgur, whole wheat couscous and other strains of wheat such as kamut and spelt
- Brown rice (including quick-cooking brown rice)
- Oat groats, steel-cut oats, rolled oats (including quick cooking and instant oatmeal)
- Whole rye
- Hulled barley (pot, scotch, and pearled barley often have much of their bran removed)

- Triticale (pronounced tri-ti-kay-lee)
- Millet
- Teff (reported to be the world's smallest grain and to have a sweet, malt-like flavor)
- Buckwheat, quinoa (pronounced keen-wah), wild rice, and amaranth are considered whole grains even though botanically they are not in the grain family of plants

**Choose Good Carbs,  
Not No Carbs.  
Whole Grains Are  
Your Best Bet**

**5 Quick Tips—Adding Good Carbs to Your Diet**

1. **Start the day with whole grains.** Try a hot cereal, like old-fashioned oats, or a cold cereal that lists a whole grain first on the ingredient list.
2. **Use whole grain breads for lunch or snacks.**
3. **Bag the potatoes.** Instead, try brown rice, bulgur, wheat berries, whole wheat pasta or another whole grain with your dinner.
4. **Choose whole fruit instead of juice.** An orange has two times as much fiber and half as much sugar as a 12-ounce glass of orange juice.
5. **Bring on the beans.** Beans are an excellent source of slowly digested carbohydrates, as well as a great source of protein.

Don't be misled by fad diets that make blanket pronouncements on the dangers of carbohydrates. They provide the body with fuel it needs for physical activity and for proper organ function, and they are an important part of a healthy diet. But some kinds of carbohydrates are far better than others.

The best sources of carbohydrates—whole grains, vegetables, fruits and beans—promote good health by delivering vitamins, minerals, fiber, and a host

of important phytonutrients. Easily digested refined carbohydrates from white bread, white rice and other refined grains, pastries, sugared sodas, and other highly processed foods may contribute to weight gain, interfere with weight loss, and promote diabetes and heart disease.

## RECIPES

### Brown Rice Mushroom Pilaf

4-6 servings

- 1/2 large onion, chopped
- 1 c sliced mushrooms
- 1 Tbs olive or canola oil
- 1 c brown rice
- 2 c chicken broth

Brown chopped onion and sliced mushrooms in a large saucepan with olive oil, about 5 minutes. Add brown rice and stir to coat grains in oil. Add chicken broth, bring to a boil, and then turn down to simmer. Simmer for about 45 minutes, or until all liquid is absorbed.

### Ten Minute Italian Sausage Pasta

4 servings

- 2 links Italian chicken or turkey sausage, in small bits (can also use leftover chicken, beans, shrimp)
- 2 c mixed chopped veggies—your choice (red peppers, zucchini, onion, mushrooms, broccoli, garlic, etc.)
- 1 c cleaned chopped spinach
- 1 jar unsweetened spaghetti sauce
- 8 oz whole wheat spiral pasta
- Freshly grated parmesan cheese (optional)

1. Fill a large saucepan with water & bring to boil. Add pasta and cook according to package.
2. Brown sausage bits in a non-stick skillet until cooked through and golden outside.
3. Chop veggies and sauté in a little olive oil until tender-crisp

4. Add the spinach, spaghetti sauce, and sausage to the veggies and warm until spinach wilts.
5. Drain pasta and combine with sauce/veggie/sausage mix. Top with cheese if desired.

### Whole Grain Pita Pizza

2 servings

- 2 round 6-7" whole wheat pitas
- 6 oz spaghetti sauce
- 3 oz part-skim shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 c chopped vegetables (onions, peppers, mushrooms, spinach, olives, etc.—your choice)
- Olive oil—drizzle

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread half the sauce on each pita round. If you're using chopped fresh spinach, add it now, before the cheese, so it won't dry out too much.
2. Top with cheese, divided between the two pizzas, and then the vegetables. Drizzle with oil.
3. Bake at 350°F for 15 minutes on a pizza pan or cookie sheet.

Much healthier than store or restaurant pizza because you have a whole-grain crust, plenty of vegetables and a reasonable amount of cheese. Add small bits of Italian chicken or turkey sausage if you like. Kids love to decorate their own pizzas!

[www.wholegrainscouncil.org](http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org)

### Jogger Bars

16 servings

- 2 Tbs butter or margarine
- 1/4 c peanut butter
- 1/2 c honey
- 1 1/2 c chopped nuts
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/2 c raisins
- 2 c whole bran cereal

In 3-quart pan, combine butter, peanut butter

and honey. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, just until mixture begins to boil. Remove from heat. Add bran, chopped nuts, raisins, cinnamon, vanilla and salt. Stir until well mixed. Turn bran mixture into a greased 8-inch square pan. Firmly press mixture into pan. Cool. Cut into 16 bars.

[www.Honey.com](http://www.Honey.com)

### Bulgur & Black Bean Salad

4 servings

- 1 orange (or lemon), grated rind and juice (grate rind first, THEN juice it!)
  - 1 c uncooked bulgur
  - 1 can black beans, drained & rinsed thoroughly (14-15 oz can)
  - 1 red bell pepper, chopped in small pieces
  - 6 stalks green onions, chopped in small pieces (green & white parts)
  - 4 Tbs fresh parsley, chopped
  - 2 tsp vinegar
  - 2 Tbs canola or olive oil
  - 1/2 tsp ground cumin
1. Put bulgur and 2 cups water in covered sauce pan. Bring to boil, then simmer 12-15 minutes until excess liquid is absorbed.
  2. Scrub orange, then grate the rind off (cheese grater works good). Cut orange in half and squeeze juice into a large mixing bowl.
  3. Add orange rind, vinegar, oil, and cumin to the orange juice in the bowl.
  4. Chop all the vegetables while the bulgur is cooking.
  5. Throw vegetables and rinsed beans in the bowl and mix. Add cooked bulgur and mix again.

Use cooked bulgur or brown rice, leftover from last night's dinner. Or use whole-wheat couscous. Add any vegetables you want. Use a lemon instead of an orange. It's up to you.

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## Chocolate Chip Cookies

Makes 4 dozen cookies

- 1 1/2 sticks butter
- 3/4 c Splenda or sugar
- 1/2 c brown sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 large eggs (or 1/2 c egg substitute)
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 1/2 c whole wheat flour
- 1/4 c unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/4 wheat bran
- 1/4 flax meal
- 1 1/2 c semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 1/2 c walnuts, chopped (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. With an electric mixer, cream together butter and sugars, then add vanilla and eggs.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the soda, flours, bran and flax meal. You can use 2 1/4 cups whole wheat flour in place of the mix of flours, bran and flax meal.
4. Gradually add flour mixture to mixing bowl; mix well.
5. Add nuts and chocolate chips and mix well.
6. Drop by rounded spoonful on a cookie sheet and bake for 8-10 minutes at 375°F.

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## Apple Blueberry Crisp

8 servings

- 1 large or extra-large egg
- 1/2 c sugar
- 1/2 c whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp vanilla
- 3 medium-size apples, cored & chopped, but not peeled
- 1 c chopped nuts (walnuts or pecans are good)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray an 8x8-inch or 9x9-inch dish with cooking spray or rub with butter.

2. Wash, core and chop apples. No need to peel them. Put in cooking dish with blueberries.
3. In another small bowl, mix flour, oats, sugar and oil until crumbly. Spread evenly over fruit.
4. Bake at 350° for about 40 minutes or until bubbly.

Serve as is, or with low-fat frozen yogurt. You can use any fruit you want. Just make sure it totals about 5 cups of fruit.

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## Italian Sausage Sandwich

4 servings

- 4 links pre-cooked chicken or turkey Italian sausage
- 2 red or green sweet peppers, sliced thinly
- 1 large onion, sliced thinly
- 2 large rounds of whole-wheat pita bread, cut in half to make pockets

1. Cut sausages in half the long way, and brown flat side down in a little olive or canola oil.
2. Sauté the pepper and onion slices in a little oil until limp.
3. Stuff one-quarter of the veggies, and 2 sausage halves into each pita pocket.

Italian sausage can be healthy? Who knew! Good chicken or turkey sausage has all the taste of fatty pork sausage but without the extra unhealthy fats. Some big plusses:

- It has great flavor. Look for varieties like Italian, teriyaki ginger, roasted garlic, tomato-and-basil, and spicy jalapeno.
- It has about 1/2 the calories, 1/3 the total fat and 1/3 the saturated fat.
- It's pre-cooked and quick. Use as is, or brown lightly for additional flavor and eye-appeal.
- You can chop leftover sausage in small bits and freeze. A little of it adds great meat flavor to omelets, soups and salads.

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