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## March 2017 (Issue 1) : Choosing Whole Grain Foods

Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi

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## CHOOSING WHOLE GRAIN FOODS

Whole grain is a grain that includes all parts of the cereal, instead of just the endosperm, which is what refined or milled grain retains. Whole grain is a good source of zinc, magnesium, vitamin B and fiber among other nutrients. Fiber in grain is important for overall health, especially for the heart, digestive tract and for prevention of diabetes. There are many sources of whole grains, some of which are whole wheat, barley, brown rice, corn and rye.

### LOOK FOR GRAINS ON FOOD LABELS

When buying a product, look at nutritional facts on the food label. If a product says “whole grain”, “multigrain” or “100% wheat”, it can be considered wholesome for health.

### HOW MUCH WHOLE GRAIN IS NEEDED EVERYDAY

It is recommended that  $\frac{1}{2}$  of all grains consumed in a day should be whole grains. The exact amount needed varies by age, gender and level of physical activity, but most adults need at least 3 to 4 ounces of whole grains every day. One ounce of whole grain is equal to one slice of brown bread,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cooked brown rice or cooked whole wheat pasta.

### WHAT IS GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

Gluten is a combination of two proteins found in cereal grains and is what gives elasticity to dough. Some people cannot tolerate wheat gluten and may suffer from gastrointestinal problems etc. as a result of this intolerance. For them, grains which are low in gluten are recommended and include corn, rice and buckwheat.

### HOW CAN I STORE GRAINS

- Always keep whole grains in airtight containers.
- Purchase small quantities to reduce spoilage.
- Keep sealed packs in fridge, if spoilage is expected.
- Whole wheat flours can be kept in the fridge.

### HOW TO ADD WHOLE GRAINS IN DAILY DIET

- Switch white bread with bran or multigrain bread.
- Reduce consumption of white flour items, such as naan and buns, and switch to home made whole grain chapatis.
- Try brown rice and whole wheat pasta.
- Use whole grain cereals for breakfast.

### TIPS TO INCLUDE GRAINS IN CHILDREN'S DIET

- Set a good example for children by eating whole grains with meals or as snacks.
- Let children select and help prepare a whole grain side dish.
- Teach older children to read the ingredients on cereals or snack packages and encourage them to choose those with whole grains at the top of the list.



References:

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/grains-tips>

<https://www.glutenfreeliving.com/gluten-free/gluten-sensitivity/what-is-gluten-sensitivity/>