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Putting MyPyramid on Your Table

Grains Group

MyPyramid is a guide to help people of any age plan a healthy diet. As we age, we need to plan more carefully the food that we choose in order to stay healthy. Individual calorie and nutrient needs change over time. This series of *Putting MyPyramid on Your Table* can help you choose foods that fit into a daily food plan to maintain good health.



Grain Group
Make half your grains whole

MyPyramid.gov

Choosing Grains

In general, try to eat at least six one-ounce equivalents from the grains group every day based on a 2,000-calorie diet. However, the amounts vary depending on age, sex, and physical activity level. Look at MyPyramid.gov to determine the amount that fits your individual needs. Make half your grains whole grains.

Why Whole Grains?

Whole grains have fiber, B vitamins, and iron. Fiber is important because it may decrease the risk of heart disease. It also may decrease the chance of getting some types of cancer and help you have regular bowel movements.

To ensure that you are getting a whole-grain product, look for whole-wheat flour, wheat bran, oat bran, wheat berries, cracked wheat, oatmeal, and rye flour on the label.

Count one slice of bread, 1 cup of cold cereal, or one-half cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta as a one-ounce equivalent. Consume a daily total of 20 to 35 grams of fiber.

Check the food label on the grains you choose for the amount of fiber in each portion. Remember to drink lots of fluids when you eat more fiber. If you decide to increase the fiber in your diet, do it gradually so your body can adjust.

Wheat and Whole-Wheat Bread

Not all brown bread is whole wheat. The first ingredient listed on the food label should be a whole grain. By law, bread that is “whole-wheat” must be made only from whole-wheat flour. “Wheat” bread may be made from both white flour and whole-wheat flour or white flour only. Labels that say “unbleached,” “enriched,” or “wheat” flour mean white flour.

Cereals

There are many cereals on the market, both hot cooked cereal and cold cereal. Follow these general guidelines when buying cereal.

- **Fiber.** Choose a cereal made from whole grain that has 2 to 3 grams of fiber per serving.
- **Sugar.** Avoid cereals with a lot of sugar. Look for a cereal with only 3 to 5 grams of sugar per serving. Cereals with raisins or other dried fruits may have up to 10 grams of sugar (about 2½ teaspoons). However, cereals with dried fruits can be a good choice because of the vitamins, minerals, and fiber that the fruit provides.
- **Sodium.** Look for a cereal with 300 milligrams or less of sodium per serving.
- **Fat.** Choose a cereal with less than 1 to 2 grams of fat per serving.
- **Vitamins.** Unless you plan to eat nothing but a bowl of cereal each day, you do not need cereal with 100 percent of your daily vitamin needs. Look at the nutrition label. How many vitamins does your choice of cereal provide? Let the food label be your guide for a healthy choice.

Pasta

Pasta is the name for noodles, spaghetti, and macaroni products. It is mostly “complex carbohydrates,” which means starch. Pasta can be dried, fresh, or frozen. You may substitute one type of pasta for

another if you use equal amounts by weight.

- Choose a tomato sauce instead of a high-fat cream sauce if you are watching fat and calories.
- Add garlic and herbs for more flavors.
- Whole-wheat pastas add extra fiber, new flavor, and texture. Try replacing half of your regular pasta with whole-wheat pasta.
- Pasta can stretch your food dollar by making meat and other protein foods go further.

Consume a variety of nutrient dense foods and beverages within and among the basic food groups while choosing foods that limit the intake of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol.

Grains are an important part of MyPyramid. Look for other *Putting MyPyramid on Your Table* fact sheets.

References

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