

**10 tips**  
**Nutrition Education Series**

# choosing whole-grain foods



## 10 tips for purchasing and storing whole-grain foods

**Whole grains are important sources of nutrients such as zinc, magnesium, B vitamins, and fiber.** There are many choices available to make half your grains whole grains. But whole-grain foods should be handled with care. Over time and if not properly stored, oils in whole grains can cause spoilage. Consider these tips to select whole-grain products and keep them fresh and safe to eat.

### 1 search the label

Whole grains can be an easy choice when preparing meals. Choose whole-grain breads, breakfast cereals, and pastas. Look at the Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients lists to find choices lower in sodium, saturated (solid) fat, and added sugars.



### 2 look for the word “whole” at the beginning of the ingredients list

Some whole-grain ingredients include whole oats, whole-wheat flour, whole-grain corn, whole-grain brown rice, and whole rye. Foods that say “multi-grain,” “100% wheat,” “high fiber,” or are brown in color may not be a whole-grain product.

### 3 kids can choose whole grains

Your kids can choose whole grains at school. Encourage healthier choices at home by adding whole grains into their favorite recipes, meals, and snacks.

### 4 find the fiber on label

If the product provides at least 3 grams of fiber per serving, it is a good source of fiber. If it contains 5 or more grams of fiber per serving, it is an excellent source of fiber.

### 5 is gluten in whole grains?

People who can't eat wheat gluten can eat whole grains if they choose carefully. There are many whole-grain products, such as buckwheat, certified gluten-free oats or oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, and quinoa that fit gluten-free diet needs.



### 6 check for freshness

Buy whole-grain products that are tightly packaged and well sealed. Grains should always look and smell fresh. Also, check the expiration date and storage guidelines on the package.

### 7 keep a lid on it

When storing whole grains from bulk bins, use containers with tight-fitting lids and keep in a cool, dry location. A sealed container is important for maintaining freshness and reducing bug infestations.

### 8 buy what you need

Purchase smaller quantities of whole-grain products to reduce spoilage. Most grains in sealed packaging can be kept in the freezer.



### 9 wrap it up

Whole-grain bread is best stored at room temperature in its original packaging, tightly closed with a quick-lock or twist tie. The refrigerator will cause bread to lose moisture quickly and become stale. Properly wrapped bread will store well in the freezer.

### 10 what's the shelf life?

Since the oil in various whole-grain flours differs, the shelf life varies too. Most whole-grain flours keep well in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 months and in the freezer for 6 to 8 months. Cooked brown rice can be refrigerated 3 to 5 days and can be frozen up to 6 months.