

# Delta Gamma Well Aware

Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development

## Understanding Whole Grains



A recent 12 year Harvard study of 74,000 women found that those who consistently ate more fiber-rich whole grains gained less weight as they aged than those who did not. If that isn't reason enough to integrate more whole grains into your diet, read on for a myriad of other health benefits.

### History of Whole Grains – Past to Present

Until about a century ago, whole grains were the basis of most diets; people did not eat refined grains at all. In the 1870s, the roller mill was widely used and white flour became popular, partly because it stayed fresh longer than whole grains.

Today, only about 8% of Americans eat any whole grains, even if they think they do. Breads labeled "rye," "multi-grain," "stone-ground," "pumpernickel," "7-grain" and "oatmeal" are simply white breads made to look like whole grains. Many diets call for the elimination of bread, citing it as the cause of weight gain, but whole-grain varieties are a nutritious and integral part of any healthy diet.



### Daily Servings

According to the government's new dietary guidelines (introduced in January 2005), three or more servings of whole grains or at least half the grain products a person eats every day, should be whole grain. The average American currently eats only 1 serving of whole grains a day.

A serving is small, just 1 ounce. Examples of 1 serving of whole grains, each containing only 70 to 110 calories, are:

- 1 slice of whole-wheat bread
- ½ whole-wheat English muffin
- ½ to 1 cup of whole-grain breakfast cereal
- ½ cup of oatmeal, whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, cornmeal mush or polenta



### Why are Whole Grains Better?

Whole-grain products contain the whole kernel, which consists of the outer shell (bran), the seed (germ) and the soft endosperm. Milling the wheat removes the bran and the germ, leaving only the starchy endosperm. Most of the fiber, vitamin E, B vitamins, zinc, selenium, copper, iron, manganese and magnesium are contained in the bran and germ. Wheat bran also has a much higher antioxidant capacity than

refined wheat. Whole grains contain some insoluble fiber, which is good for the digestive tract, and some soluble fiber, which promotes healthy blood cholesterol levels. Oats, barley and rye are extremely rich in soluble fiber. Whole grains also contain phytochemicals such as rutin (a flavonoid that may reduce the risk of heart disease), lignans, antioxidants and other beneficial compounds.



### **What health benefits do whole grains have?**

Whole grains may protect against diabetes by preventing spikes in blood sugar, helping insulin to do its job. They also help reduce the risk of colon cancer as well as cancers of the mouth and stomach. New research from the American Institute of Cancer Research suggests that the high levels of phenols (phytochemicals) ward off and even repair, free radical damage, helping to protect against several different kinds of cancer. The fiber in whole grains also prevents constipation and diverticulitis as well.

A diet rich in whole grains has been linked to a lower risk of heart disease and stroke. This is possibly because of the:

- cholesterol-lowering properties of soluble fiber
- extra vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals
- fact that whole grains take the place of various other less healthy foods

Weight control is another huge advantage to eating whole grains. By stabilizing insulin levels, whole grains seem to deter fat storage and satisfy hunger for longer periods of time than do refined grains.



### **Is it really “whole grain?”**

It can be extremely difficult to determine whether or not a product is truly “whole grain.” There are many misleading titles and a lack of education in America as to what is truly “whole grain.” The Whole Grains Council has created stamps/seals that will soon begin appearing on qualifying products, hopefully saving you time reading labels at the supermarket. In the meantime, keep the following in mind:

- If “wheat flour” is the first ingredient listed, it’s refined white flour, which is not a whole grain.
- Look for “whole wheat” as opposed to just “wheat,” “whole rye” and opposed to just “rye,” “whole-grain pumpernickel” as opposed to just “pumpernickel,” etc.
- “Hard white wheat” is lighter than regular wheat and can now be found in tortillas and some noodles – this is indeed a whole-grain.
- Oats are whole grains, even the finely ground instant type. However, “oatmeal bread” usually contains refined wheat flour and only a small amount of oats.
- Whole grains and groats are interchangeable terms for unrefined grains.
- Other whole grains include corn, popcorn, brown, red and black rices. Some basmati and flavored rices are whole grain, but not all so check the ingredient list. Couscous can come in whole-grain varieties, but is usually refined wheat.
- Whole grains have as much higher fiber content than refined grains, so check the fiber content. (E.g. - a slice of whole rye bread will have at least 3 grams of fiber, whereas a slice of refined-wheat rye will have only 1 gram or less).
- Most crackers, even “stoned-wheat” and “wheaty” sounding others are made from refined flour. True whole-wheat crackers tend to be heavier, such as flatbreads.
- Store whole grains in the refrigerator if possible, and throw them away when they begin to have a stale odor.



### Try These Whole Grains

Brown rice is the first whole grain most people add to their menu, but the following can now be more readily found in many high-end supermarkets and natural food stores:

- **Barley** – beige, nutty-flavored grain that contains a specific type of fiber which may help lower levels of total cholesterol. It is delicious in mushroom soup or as a substitute for bread in a stuffing recipe.
- **Buckwheat** – wheatlike herb used all over the world, giving food a purple-grayish color. Half a cup of cooked buckwheat groats contains nearly 10% of your daily fiber requirement and it is also the only grain containing rutin, an antioxidant that may improve circulation and prevent arterial plaque. Use cooked buckwheat groats in meatloaf instead of breadcrumbs and substitute baked buckwheat groats (kasha) for sides like rice pilaf.
- **Farro/Spelt** – a cousin of modern-day wheat, farro/spelt has a nutty texture and high protein content. It is a great substitute for those with wheat allergies and can be cooked risotto-style, added to soup or tossed with beans and roasted vegetables.
- **Quinoa (KEEN wah)** – small, round, high-protein grain that is an excellent source of iron (supplying your entire recommended daily allowance in just one cup). After thoroughly rinsing quinoa, cook it and use in place of couscous or rice.
- **Wheatberry** – the whole wheat kernel. Half a cup of cooked wheatberries supplies just 42 calories and has selenium, potassium, folate and fiber. Steamed, dried and crushed wheatberries are known as bulgur, and is delicious in salads.
- **Wild Rice** – this seed from an aquatic grass is not a rice at all. It contains 50% more protein than brown rice and less than half the fat. Try preparing cooked wild rice in a salad or adding it to pilafs.



### Wellness Resources

*This information is a summary from the following resources:*

American Institute for Cancer Research, [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org)

Whole Grains Council, [www.wholegrainscouncil.org](http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org)

*Cooking Light*, October 2005

*Wellness Letter*, University of California, Berkeley, March 2005

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