



Whole grains turn up in surprising places

A group of us were watching a football game last week, and someone claimed that the tortilla chips we were eating counted as a “whole-grain” food. I find that hard to believe. Is that right?

It could be. To determine whether a food is “whole grain,” take a look at the ingredients on the food label. You’ll find that many types of tortilla chips and other corn-based snack chips list “whole-grain corn” as the primary ingredient. Whole-grain corn, like whole wheat or other whole grains, is indeed, well, a whole grain.

While this could mean the chips are a better choice than a snack made entirely of refined grains, don’t take that as permission to down a family-size package. While the U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that at least half the grains we eat should be whole grains, most Americans eat a lot more grain-based foods than we need, period — often more than double what’s recommended.

So while it’s a good idea to replace the refined grains we eat with whole grains, it’s just as important to remember to keep total grain consumption in check in the first place.

And it’s also important to take into consideration other factors that affect the overall healthfulness of a food: the amount of saturated fat, sodium and added sugars, for example, as well as the number of calories per serving.

Whole grains are preferred over refined grains for a simple reason: Calorie for calorie, they offer more nutrition. Whole grains include the entire grain kernel, which provides nutrients including iron, magnesium, selenium, B vitamins and often dietary fiber. Refined grains, on the other hand, have been milled to remove the bran and germ from the grain — this increases their shelf-life and gives the grain a finer texture, but also strips them of most of their nutrients. Most refined grains are enriched with B vitamins and iron to replace some of what was lost in the refining process, but enrichment can’t replace everything.

To eat more whole grains, choose:

- Foods with the primary ingredient listed as a “whole” grain, such as wheat or corn.
- Whole-wheat bread, or bread that contains a good portion of whole grain indicated by being at or near the top of the ingredients list.
- Whole-wheat pasta.
- Brown rice instead of white.
- Oatmeal, rolled oats or whole oats.

Terms such as “multigrain” or “stoneground” do not indicate whether the grain is whole or not.

For more tips, see the Choose My Plate web page at <http://bit.ly/whlgrns>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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