

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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How Much Whole Grain – 10-to-1

Whole grain bread, whole grain pancakes, whole grain pasta, whole grain crackers! We should have whole grains coming out our ears if you look at the labeling in the grocery store. But the truth is that not very many of us get as much real, true whole grains as we should. The recommendation is that at least half the grain products we eat should be made of whole grains. And few of us do.

But how can that be, with so many whole grain products on the market? Some folks might have terrible memories of the heavy lumps of brown bread that were the early attempts at whole grain. All their taste buds remember is the old stuff, and they've never gotten past it to try some of the newer products. Too bad!

But there are a lot of us who are doing our best, reading our labels, deliberately choosing the package that says 'whole grain' in big letters on the front. And we're still not getting much real whole grain. We might even go a step further and check for 'fiber' in the Nutrition Facts box. Still not enough! So how much do we need? And how can we tell?

The front of a food package is often not enough to tell you what you need to know. Something may be labeled 'whole grain' but only have a teaspoon of real whole wheat flour inside. That's not going to make a difference to your health. But if you see the 'whole grain stamp' you're on the right track. It looks like a brown postage stamp. It might say '100% whole grain', or it might just say 'whole grain'. Underneath the sheaf of wheat on the stamp it will give a number: 8, 16, 23, 47 grams of whole grain. That's how much real whole grain you'll get in a serving of that product. If it doesn't say 100% whole grain then at least some of the grains in there are refined flours or grains. So one way to tell what you're getting is to look for the brown stamp.

Another way of course is to read the ingredients list. The first item on the list will hopefully be whole wheat, or whole barley, or oatmeal. But there are almost 30 different grains that could show

up, so that can get a little confusing. Still, it is worth checking to see what ingredients are in there.

Now there's a third way to get an idea of what you're buying. Harvard researchers measured the fiber in 545 different whole grain products and compared the amount of total carbohydrate with the amount of fiber. Whole grains still have all their natural fiber, which is partly why we should be eating them. What Harvard found was that for most products, the best amount would be at least 1 g of fiber for each 10 g of total carbohydrate. So if crackers have 27 g of total carbohydrate per serving, they should have at least 2.7, or almost 3 g of fiber to show that they're mostly whole grain.

It should be pretty easy to remember 1 for each 10. One gram of fiber for each 10 of carbohydrate is what we're looking for.

But there's a catch here too. Many products that claim 'high fiber' on the front of the package are still not whole grain. Plain fiber can be added. But the added fiber rarely has all the health benefits of the fiber Mother Nature put there. So you still need to read the ingredient list. If you see *inulin, chicory root, chicory root fiber, or pectin*, those are added, isolated fiber. They might give you gas. They might make you feel a little more full. But they won't have the same heart and health benefits of whole grains.

The exception would be that yes, you expect to see pectin in a jar of jam or jelly, but those are not whole grains! And not many of us really eat jam as a health food!

These oatmeal pancakes use real whole grain oatmeal. There's a little all purpose flour to help them hold together, but you'll still get the oats. Serve with some fresh chopped strawberries and a bit of maple syrup for a warm breakfast on these cool mornings. Enjoy!

Oatmeal Pancakes

2 cups buttermilk	1 tsp sugar
1 ½ cups old-fashioned oatmeal	1 tsp baking soda
½ cup sifted all purpose flour	2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 tsp salt	

Combine the buttermilk and oats in a bowl and mix well. Stir in rest of ingredients. Preheat griddle or skillet and oil lightly. Pour 1/3 cup of batter onto griddle. Cook until bubbles around the edges of the pancake stay open. Turn and cook until other side is golden. Repeat with all of batter. Serves 4. Extras can be frozen and reheated later.

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