



# Mealtimes Mentoring

## Encouraging Whole Grains and Water

*Two commonly asked questions: How do whole grains fit in a healthy menu? How much water should children drink?*

### Whole Grains

#### How often should I serve whole grains?

Canada's Food Guide suggests that you choose at least half of your grain products as whole grain.

You can do this by:

- choosing whole grain bread products such as whole grain bagels, tortillas, bannock, pitas and rolls,
- serving oatmeal and other whole grain cereals for breakfast,
- using whole grain pasta for spaghetti, lasagne, and as soup noodles,
- serving brown rice and couscous,
- trying bulgur and barley as a side dish, in soup or as a salad, and
- using brown rice or mix half and half brown and white rice.

#### What is the difference between whole grain, multigrain and refined grains?

*Whole grain products* contain the entire grain kernel. This includes the bran, the germ and the endosperm.



*Refined grains* such as white rice and white flour have the germ and bran removed. This removes fibre, vitamins and minerals.

*Multigrain* products may contain a variety of different grains, but the grains may not be whole grain.

#### How do you know it is whole grain?

Make sure the words "whole grain" are listed in the main ingredients. Whole grains include whole grain whole wheat, whole grain corn, whole oats/oatmeal, whole rye, bulgur, whole grain barley, brown rice, wild rice, triticale, popcorn and quinoa.

*Whole wheat* bread and cereal may be whole grain. But, some whole wheat products have part of the wheat's germ removed so the product does not spoil quickly. If this is removed, they would no longer be whole grain. These are still healthy choices that provide the fibre which is removed from refined white breads and cereals. Some whole wheat cereals and breads may look white because they are made with wheat that has white-coloured bran.

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## **Many products say they are enriched. What does this mean?**

Enriched products have some of the nutrients that were lost in processing added back to them. This makes them more nutritious. Some examples are enriched breads, cereals and pastas. They have iron, folic acid and B vitamins added. In Canada, whole wheat flour and whole grain flour are not enriched with folic acid.

### **How can I serve whole grains easily?**

Healthy eating doesn't have to be complicated. Remember that sandwiches are a nutritious meal choice which can give you whole grains. Try a variety of fillings and breads.

### **How does a sandwich help provide a balanced lunch?**

The following sandwich meals provide all 4 food groups:

- A whole grain bread + peanut butter + banana with a glass of milk.
- A whole grain wrap + ham + grated cheese served with carrot sticks.
- A whole grain bagel + tuna salad served with a broccoli-raisin salad + milk.
- A whole grain pita + shaved beef + melted cheese served with sliced tomatoes.
- A whole wheat English muffin + over-easy egg + cheese slice served with a bowl of fruit cocktail.
- A whole grain bread + chicken or tuna salad served with raw vegetables and dip and milk.

- A grilled whole grain bread + cheese served with sliced meat and apple wedges.
- Whole grain bannock + cheese served with chili.

### **Water**

#### **How much water should children drink?**



There is no specific amount of water that a child should drink. Offer water regularly throughout the day, including with meals and snacks. Also offer water when it is warm outside and before, during and after play. This will help children learn to enjoy plain water.

Children get some water from other beverages and the foods they eat. For example milk, vegetables, fruit, soups, and stews all contain water. But in order for children to get what they need, water needs to be offered several times throughout the day. Let the children decide how much or if they drink the water you provide.



*Helping you provide healthy food and a positive eating environment  
in early learning and child care settings.*

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