

2011 4-H Consumer Choices Study Guide Junior and Senior Division

Breakfast Cereals

Introduction and Background

Have you heard of the "most important meal of the day?" That's breakfast.

A healthful, balanced breakfast can give you the energy you need to do well in school. If you do not eat breakfast, you are more likely to feel tired, restless and even crabby.



With so many breakfast foods out there, how do you know which ones are the most healthful options? Think about the food groups shown on MyPlate (grain, vegetable, fruit, milk, and meat and beans) and some foods you like from each group. Which foods would you enjoy for breakfast? For more information check out the MyPlate website www.myplate.gov

Let's take a closer look. What breakfast cereals are in your cupboards? Sweetened cereals are marketed skillfully to today's youth. The breakfast cereal aisle at your grocery store is loaded with colorful boxes and bags of dry cereal. The bright colors and cute cartoon characters on the packages may get your attention. Look beyond the advertising to find out what cereals are best for you.

Some Types of Breakfast Cereals

While many types of breakfast cereals are available, most of them can be broken into just five main categories.

Whole-grain Cereal

Nutrition experts recommend that we make half our grain choices whole-grain. Whole grains are an excellent source of fiber. Identify whole-grain products by reading the ingredients listing on the food label. You cannot identify whole grains by the color of the food. Examples of whole grains are whole barley, brown rice, bulgur (cracked wheat), whole wheat, oats and rye. Look for the whole-grain or made with whole grain cereals. Examples such as Cheerios, Kashi and Shredded Wheat feature whole grains with very little or no added sugars. To identify a whole-grain cereal, you can look for the health claim. Researchers at Columbia University Medical Center have found that oat-based whole-grain cereals can help reduce blood cholesterol and aid in heart health. Other whole grains, such as whole wheat, can help you feel full and satisfied as you start your day.



Hot Cereal

Hot cereals such as oatmeal, Cream of Wheat and Malt-O-Meal are a warm, comforting and wholesome way to enjoy breakfast. Some hot cereals are available in wholesome, unsweetened versions as well as instant, sweetened versions. By buying unsweetened, whole-grain hot breakfast cereals, you can add naturally sweet fruit or a drizzle of honey for a touch of sweetness.

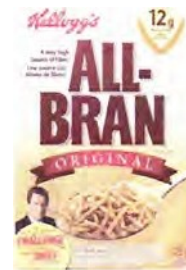


Ready-to-eat Cereal

Many ready-to-eat cereals such as Corn Flakes and Rice Krispies are not made from a whole grain. These cereals are fortified and enriched to include some of the nutrients that we get from whole grains.

Bran Cereal

Bran cereals, such as Raisin Bran, Fiber One, All-Bran and Bran Flakes, are high-fiber offerings for your breakfast table. Fiber can help you keep feeling full and aid in digestion and regularity. Are you getting enough dietary fiber in your daily diet? Consider adding a bran-based cereal to your morning routine. When adding fiber to your diet, add it slowly and drink plenty of water.



Sweetened Cereal

Sweetened cereals sometimes are called "candy cereals," and they often are placed at a child's eye level in the grocery store. Check the ingredient label for added sweeteners, which may be listed as sugar, brown sugar, honey, molasses, high-fructose corn syrup, dextrose, sucrose, maltose or fruit juice concentrates.



If you enjoy sweetened cereals such as Reese's Puffs, Fruit Loops and Lucky Charms, have them as an occasional fun treat but not on a daily basis. Or mix sweetened cereals with unsweetened cereals. Many nutrition experts recommend that we look for cereals with 8 grams or less of sugar per serving. Look at the Nutrition Facts label and compare grams of sugar among types of cereal.

Organic Cereal

Nature's Path, EnviroKidz and Cascadian Farm are examples of organic cereal brands. Organic food is produced without using pesticides and fertilizers. Organic foods also cannot be genetically engineered. Compare the Nutrition Facts labels to help you decide if the added cost is worth the possible benefit to your health.



Questions to Ask Yourself

- Do you "make half your grains whole"? MyPyramid teaches us to make at least half of our grain food choices whole grains. For kids and teens, this means trying to eat at least 3 ounces of whole grains each day.
- How do you know if a food has whole grain? Look for a couple of clues.

1. Look for the word "whole" before grain on the ingredient list. It is usually under the Nutrition Facts panel. For example, the ingredient list for Cheerios is: Whole Grain Oats (includes the oat bran), Modified Corn Starch, Sugar, Salt, Tripotassium Phosphate, Wheat Starch.
 2. Look for a "health claim" on the package. Some whole grain foods also carry a health claim, such as this: *"Diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol and rich in fruits, vegetables, and grain products that contain fiber, particularly soluble fiber, may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease."*
- ! Do you like colorful cereal that is very sweet? Many cereals have lots of added sweeteners. We all can enjoy some sweet treats, but not if it crowds out healthier foods. Go for the nutrition bonus by enjoying naturally sweet fruit on your whole-grain cereal. Raisins or other dried fruits will add to the amount of sugar shown on the Nutrition Facts panel. This natural sugar is not distinguished from added sugars, so you only can estimate the amounts of natural versus added sugars.
 - ! Check the list of ingredients to help you determine how much sweetener has been added. Ingredients are listed on the ingredient label in order of weight, from most to least. If sugar is listed first, you may want to keep looking to get the most nutrition for your money. Is your cereal a good source of fiber? Fiber fills you up and may help with weight management. "Insoluble fiber" (found in bran cereals) may help prevent constipation. "Soluble fiber" (found in oatmeal) may help people reduce their blood cholesterol level.
 - ! How much fat does the cereal contain? Although many types of cereals are low in fat, many granolas and some other cereals may contain saturated fat from coconut or palm oil. Saturated fat and trans fat are not heart-healthy fats. Compare Nutrition Facts labels.
 - ! How hungry are you? Whole-grain breakfast cereals can be tasty, good for you and fill you up, too. Pay attention to the serving size on the package. Is it 1 cups, 1 cup, % cup or cup? We may eat more than the suggested single serving size found on the food label. Remember that the numbers on the Nutrition Facts label refers to the nutrients in one serving of the food, so you may need to do some math.
 - ! How much can you spend? To compare food items, you need to look at the cost per serving. To determine the cost per serving, you can divide the total cost of the snack by the number of servings.
 - ! Is it good for you? Your breakfast combines with the meals and snacks you eat to make your body strong and healthy. Calcium, iron, protein, vitamin A and vitamin C are important for growing bodies. These nutrients are listed on the Nutrition Facts panel.
 - ! Do you drink the milk in the bottom of your cereal bowl? Most breakfast cereals are fortified with vitamins and minerals and contain 10 to 100 percent of the daily value for nutrients. Some vitamins and minerals may end up in the bowl, so drink your milk to take advantage of the nutrients.

You deserve the best. Your body is an amazing machine, and food is the fuel. Choosing your breakfast cereal wisely helps you put the best fuel in your body and will keep your body running at its best.

Reading Food Labels

Sample label for Macaroni & Cheese

1 Start Here →

2 Check Calories

3 Limit these Nutrients

4 Get Enough of these Nutrients

5 Foodnote <

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)			
Servings per Container 2			
Amount per Serving			
Calories 250		Calories from Fat 110	
		% Daily Value*	
Total Fat	12g		18%
Saturated Fat	3g		15%
Trans Fat	3g		
Cholesterol	30mg		10%
Sodium	470mg		20%
Total Carbohydrates	31g		10%
Dietary Fiber	0g		0%
Sugars	5g		
Protein	5g		
Vitamin A			4%
Vitamin C			2%
Calcium			20%
Iron			4%
*percent daily values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.			
		Calories	2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrates		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

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Quick Guide to % Daily Value

- 5% or less is Low
- 20% or more is High

Information compiled by Monique Stelzer for North Dakota 4-H Consumer Choices
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