

Whole Grains: Get Enough on the Gluten-Free Diet

By Shelley Case, RD

When you follow a gluten-free diet, it's important to realize that all cereals are not the enemy. In fact, gluten-free whole grains are superb for your diet and essential to good health. Studies show that those who regularly eat whole grains have lower cholesterol levels, reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer and obesity.

What Are They?

Whole grains are the seeds or kernels of plants that are composed of:

- the bran, the outer seed layer and source of fiber, B vitamins and antioxidants;
- the germ, the part that sprouts into a new plant and contains protein, healthy fats, B vitamins, vitamin E and minerals;
- and the endosperm, the largest portion of the seed that is mostly starch and small amounts of minerals and vitamins.

Gluten-free whole grains include amaranth; buckwheat; corn; millet; pure, uncontaminated oats ^[1]; quinoa; rice (black, brown, red, wild); sorghum and teff.

Getting Whole Grains on the Gluten-Free Diet

The typical gluten-free diet is built around white rice and baked products, cereals, snack bars and pasta – often made from white rice flour and starches (corn, potato and tapioca). If you see your own diet in that description, it's time to change how you eat since these refined flours and starches do not contain the bran and germ. That means you're missing out on important nutrients. By using gluten-free whole grains, you can boost the quality of your diet.

How to incorporate whole grains into your meals and snacks:

- Jump start your day with a hot cereal such as gluten-free rolled oats, buckwheat or quinoa flakes, cream of brown rice or cooked amaranth, millet, quinoa, steel-cut gluten-free oats or teff grains. Sprinkle with cinnamon, brown sugar or honey and top with fresh or dried fruits like sliced bananas, blueberries, mangoes, peaches, apricots and raisins.
- Another breakfast option is granola. There are many [gluten-free granolas](#) ^[2] on the market. Or make your own using gluten-free oats, seeds (flax, sesame, sunflower, hemp, chia) and nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans).
- Top yogurt with granola for a great snack.
- Dress cooked buckwheat, gluten-free oat groats or steel-cut oats, quinoa, millet, colored rice (black, brown, red), wild rice, sorghum or teff with a zesty salad dressing. Add chopped green and red onions, peppers and other favorite veggies, along with nuts and seeds for a hearty salad.
- Buy pasta made with amaranth, brown rice, buckwheat, millet or quinoa.

For more ideas about adding whole grains to the gluten-free diet see

<http://www.glutenfreediet.ca/img/WholeGrainHandoutFinalApril2012.pdf> ^[3]

Cooking Whole Grains

In a heavy-bottomed sauce pan, with a tight fitting lid, bring water or gluten-free broth to a boil. Slowly add the whole grain and simmer on low until all the liquid is absorbed. Cooking times will vary, depending on the grain you choose. For more on cooking times, see this [handy chart](#) ^[4].

Recipes

Following are some tasty recipes that use whole grains: • [Chickpea Burgers with Buckwheat Tabbouleh Salad](#) ^[5] • [Blueberry Flax Muffins](#) ^[6] • [Carrot Apple Energy Bars](#) ^[6] • [Carol Fenster's Wild Rice Salad](#) ^[7]

- Learn more of the health benefits of whole grains [here](#) ^[8].

- Shelley Case has hot tips for weight management on the gluten-free diet [here](#) ^[9].

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For more information about the GF diet see: www.glutenfreediet.ca ^[11]

Article printed from Allergic Living:

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