

Benefits Of Whole Grains For Reducing Risk Of Serious Illness

WHAT IS NUTRITION?

Nutritionists are experts in the science of how the food we eat affects our health and wellbeing. By learning about your eating habits and lifestyle, and providing nutritional information, a nutritionist can advise you on choosing the right foods for a healthy lifestyle which may help prevent a variety of illnesses.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to be a global facilitator of health and wellness through access, education and advancement of Traditional & Complementary Medicine (T&CM). The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that lifestyle-related diseases (or non-communicable diseases) are responsible for more than 70% of deaths worldwide each year.

Knowledge represents empowerment. By sharing this evidence-based, peer-reviewed research, we aim to support everyday people to take ownership of their wellness, by making informed decisions and choices in conjunction with their health professional.

How This Study Could Help You Reduce Your Risk of Serious Illness

The connection between non-communicable diseases and what people eat has been extensively documented for decades. This review seeks to determine the best amount of whole grains a person should have in their diet with the aim of reducing their risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, and other causes of premature mortality. It is titled:

WHOLE GRAIN CONSUMPTION AND RISK OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE, CANCER, AND ALL CAUSE AND CAUSE SPECIFIC MORTALITY: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND DOSE-RESPONSE META-ANALYSIS OF PROSPECTIVE STUDIES.

You can read the full study here: https://www.bmj.com/content/353/bmj.i2716

Why Is This Study Important?

There is extensive evidence linking a diet high in whole grains with a reduced risk of chronic diseases, and non-communicable diseases are estimated to cause more than two-thirds of all deaths worldwide. This is why a clear understanding is needed on how to maximise the benefits of this staple food item that may significantly reduce the risk of premature death from all natural causes.

Previous studies have suggested whole grains may reduce the risk of cancers of the digestive system, as well as heart disease, stroke and diabetes. However, the recommendations about this aspect of nutrition vary in different parts of the world, and whole grain intake is measured in a number of ways. For these reasons, health advice for average consumers has been less specific than it could be to ensure more people obtain the maximum preventative benefit from eating foods containing whole grains.

What Does This Mean For My Wellness?

In this study, after an initial 10-day inpatient program was concluded, the participants in the treatment group were provided with support materials and entrusted with taking ownership of their care. Follow-up naturopathic treatments were provided three weeks after each cycle of chemotherapy, but on the whole, the lifestyle adjustments adopted by the participants were their own responsibility.

Long-term improvements in mental wellbeing and quality of life were documented by the researchers using industry-standard diagnostic tools as well as purpose-designed questionnaires. These findings that suggest empowering cancer patients with options such as naturopathy and yoga, and encouraging them to take an active role in supporting their own treatment, can have ongoing benefits for quality of life.

The authors noted that their finding of increased haemoglobin levels in the treatment group was consistent with previous research that suggested both the consumption of fruits and vegetables and the practice of yoga may promote the production of new blood cells. Besides the benefit for people diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, this may be useful information for those seeking options to boost their haemoglobin levels.



How Does This Relate to Diet and Nutrition?

Nutritionists and dietitians are trained to provide tailored advice for an optimal balance of food intake, including what varieties and quantities of whole grain foods are best for a person to eat. Additionally, developing simple and clear guidelines for the average person makes it easier for them to make nutritional choices that may reduce their risk of developing cancer, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and other chronic illnesses.

The different methods that previous authors have used to measure whole grain intake and risk reduction in other studies have made it difficult to obtain a clear understanding of how eating more of these foods relates to their preventative effects. In this review, published in 2016, researchers affiliated with the Imperial College, London, UK, reviewed 45 quality studies involving significant numbers of participants, or cases of deaths, in order to establish how much whole grain food was needed in a person's diet to achieve the most significant benefit in reducing disease risk.

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Key Findings About Whole Grains for Reducing the Risk of Serious Illness

- The evidence suggested eating 90g, or three servings, of whole grains per day reduced the risk of cardiovascular disease by 22% and cancer by 15%, compared to eating no whole grain foods at all. Further (but more gradual) reductions in risk were noted up to about 210-225g per day.

- The researchers reported a diet rich in whole grains may also reduce the risk of death from other diseases, including respiratory diseases, diabetes and kidney disease, and even infectious diseases.

- The authors noted that eating up to 60-90g of whole grains per day may reduce the likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes, but larger quantities of whole grains were not associated with any further reduction.

- The greatest change in mortality risk was reported in people who went from eating no whole grain foods at all, to two servings per day. The authors suggested that this data could be used to educate populations with very low whole grain intake, possibly resulting in the greatest community benefit.

- The researchers did not closely examine the reasons why whole grains might have the reported impact on reducing one's risk of cardiovascular disease. However, they noted that the studies reviewed found that the positive effects of consuming whole grains persisted regardless of a person's body mass index, or other types of food consumed.

Disclaimer: The above does not constitute medical advice, and as with any exercise or wellness program, please consult your medical professional before making major modifications to your diet.

The BMJ is defined by its mission: to work towards a healthier world for all. We share that global endeavour with millions of readers working in clinical practice, research, education, government, and with patients and the public too.

Quoted from journal description

References

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