



Different types of grains and their benefits

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DESCRIPTION

Cereals are the edible seeds of plants in the cereal family. There are many types of grains, but the most common are wheat, barley, oats, quinoa, rye and rice. An excellent source of dietary fiber, vitamins and minerals, grains are the world's largest source of food and nutrition. When properly incorporated, they are essential and easy to prepare for a healthy diet.

The USDA recommends that an adult consumes 6 to 8 ounces of grains per day for a healthy diet, at least half of which should be whole grains. The vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that whole grains provide have many potential health benefits. For example, replacing refined grains with potassium-rich whole grains can lower blood pressure. The fiber in whole grains slows digestion and lowers the glycemic index. Foods with a high glycemic index (such as refined grains) can be digested very quickly, which can cause our blood sugar to spike and increase our risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) was first cultivated around 8,000 BC. Barley is high in carbohydrates but low in gluten, so it is used in flatbreads and oatmeal. Commonly available

pearl barley has no bran and is not technically a whole grain. Look for "whole barley" or "peeled barley" to get it. The nutty flavor of whole barley makes it a great addition to soups and stews.

Buckwheat is a pseudo-grain (not part of the grass family), actually a fruit related to rhubarb, harvested for its small triangular seeds. Ground buckwheat is processed into crepes, buckwheat and pierogi, and whole grits (called kasha in Russia) are eaten as a side dish. Buckwheat is unique in that it is the only grain high in the antioxidant rutin. The nutty, bitter taste of whole-wheat buckwheat flour is delicious with chocolate chip cookies and gluten-free pastries. Composed of small brown seeds, amaranth is nutritionally similar to grains. Amaranth is naturally gluten-free. The high protein content of this grain/seed helps those on a plant-based diet meet their daily protein needs.

Brown rice (*Oryza sativa*) gets its color from the bran layer that surrounds the grain. After the rice is harvested, the bran and germ layers remain or are removed, resulting in brown and white rice, respectively. Almost all types of rice are available as brown rice, including basmati,

jasmine, short, medium and long grain. The bran coating gives brown rice its nutty flavor and crunchiness. Brown rice has three times more fiber than white rice and is rich in protein, potassium, B vitamins, magnesium, zinc, iron, selenium and manganese, which are important for bone growth and energy. Try brown rice with stir-fried vegetables, kimchi fried rice, and grain rice bowls. Quinoa has small, round seeds and comes in red, white, or black varieties. Quinoa is also gluten-free. Quinoa (pronounced Keenwah) can be cooked like a grain, but it's actually a herbaceous plant. Quinoa Benefits is a complete protein containing all nine essential amino acids. It is also a good source of magnesium to prevent osteoporosis.