

Heart Health with grains and legumes

FACT SHEET

Whole grains, high fibre grains and legumes for better heart health

Smart choices for heart health

Cardiovascular disease includes several conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels and is one of Australia's largest health problems. Over time fatty deposits can stick to the walls of blood vessels and build up to form plaques. If the plaques break off and block the blood vessel, the flow of blood and oxygen to vital organs such as the brain may be stopped. This can lead to a heart attack or stroke. So it's important to make smart choices today to keep your blood vessels and your heart healthy for tomorrow.

There are a number of changes you can make to your everyday life that can reduce the chance of developing heart disease. These include regular exercise, stopping smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and choosing heart healthy foods.

Want to know what foods to eat to reduce your risk of heart disease by up to 30%? Grains and legumes!



Grains for a healthy heart

People who eat at least two to three serves of whole grain and high fibre grain foods a day are less likely to develop heart disease.¹⁻⁴ In fact, eating whole grain and high fibre grain foods regularly has been shown to help reduce your risk of heart disease by up to 30%. Some smart grain choices include wholemeal or mixed grain bread and pasta as well as whole grain and high fibre breakfast cereal, porridge or natural muesli and brown rice.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol can put people at greater risk of heart disease, but eating whole grain and high fibre grain foods regularly can help reduce these risks. People who eat whole grain foods and bran regularly are less likely to have high blood pressure.^{5,6} And the soluble fibre called beta-glucan in grain foods like oats can help lower cholesterol.⁷

Legumes keep your heart ticking along

People who eat legumes such as beans, lentils and peas several times a week are less likely to have heart disease than people who don't eat legumes.⁸ One study in particular found that people who ate legumes four times a week were 22% less likely to suffer coronary heart disease.⁹

Did you know:



Men who eat breakfast cereal everyday are less likely to develop high blood pressure than those who never eat cereal.¹⁷

Studies have shown that eating legumes regularly can significantly reduce cholesterol.^{10,11} This is true of soy foods as well as chickpeas, navy beans (baked beans), pinto beans and flour made from beans. In particular, eating one cup of legumes a day has been shown to reduce cholesterol in people over 50 years old and in people who have diabetes.^{12,13}



**Grains &
Legumes
Nutrition
Council**

Cultivating Good Health

Legumes are very versatile and easy to cook. They can be added to salads, soups, casseroles or mixed with side dishes like rice, couscous or pasta. You can halve the salt content of canned legumes simply by rinsing them thoroughly before you add them to your meal.¹⁴

Packed full of goodness

Grains and legumes contain a host of nutrients for heart health. Whole grain foods are a package of fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals as well as a range of phytonutrients including plant sterols, which help reduce cholesterol.

Most legumes are naturally low GI and contain healthy fats, different types of fibre including soluble fibre as well as plant sterols.

That's why eating a variety of whole grain and high fibre grain foods and legumes regularly, as part of balanced meals together with enjoying regular exercise, will help maintain a healthy heart.

How much do you need?

To ensure you are getting the full benefit of whole grains aim for 48g of whole grains a day.¹⁵ Not all foods contain the same amount of whole grain so check the ingredient list and choose the food with the higher percent whole grain.

To reduce risk of heart disease and other chronic disease, men need 38g of fibre a day and women need 28g.¹⁶ Check the nutrition information panel and choose foods higher in fibre per serve.

Try to eat at least two or three meals with legumes each week. For the heart health benefits without the gas, start with trying legumes once a week and slowly increase to more often. Remember to drink plenty of water and exercise regularly.



Grain and Legume meal and snack ideas

Breakfast

- Whole grain, wholemeal or mixed grain toast, English muffins or crumpets
- Whole grain or high fibre breakfast cereal with fruit
- Porridge or natural muesli with yoghurt
- Baked beans on wholemeal toast
- Spanish baked eggs with butter beans

Lunch

- Brown rice or wholemeal pasta salad
- Mini pizza on wholemeal/mixed grain English muffins or pita bread
- French style lentil and quinoa salad*
- Pumpkin, sweet potato and chick pea soup* with whole grain crisp bread
- Sandwich made with whole grain, wholemeal or mixed grain bread

Dinner

- Brown rice stuffed capsicum*
- Chilli con carne with kidney beans
- Crushed whole grain/ high fibre breakfast cereals added to homemade rissoles
- Indian spiced millet pilaf*

- Side dishes: 4-bean salad or wheat berry tabouleh* (see photo)
- Lentil pot pies

Dessert

- Apple berry oat crumble*
- Wholemeal flour in cakes, muffins, puddings and slices

Snacks

- Low salt whole grain crispbreads/ rice cakes /crackers with hummus or avocado
- Popcorn (plain or lightly salted is best)
- Kidney bean tapenade*
- Roasted chickpeas*
- Smoked salmon rye crostinis*

Visit www.glnc.org.au for these and other delicious recipes and to learn more about the benefits of grains and legumes.

For individualised dietary advice see an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD). Visit www.daa.asn.au to find a dietitian near you.



Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council™

Cultivating Good Health

For all references cited go to www.glnc.org.au/resources/fact-sheet-references

Contact Us - Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council™

P: 1300 472 467 (Australia only) **P:** +61 2 8877 7877 **E:** contactus@glnc.org.au **W:** www.glnc.org.au