

## Cereal Fiber Protects Against Heart Disease

Whole grains have long been linked to lower risk of developing coronary heart disease. A new study now shows that even in people who have experienced a heart attack, eating more fiber from whole grains is associated with a decreased risk of death from cardiovascular causes. The study included 4,098 men and women who experienced a heart attack but survived. Researchers looked at their intake of fiber from whole grains and found that those who increased their fiber intake cut their risk of dying from future heart disease by 35 percent over the nine-year study. They also reduced their risk of death from any cause by 31 percent.

### Fiber and the Glycemic Index

Increasing fiber in your diet is important for good health for several reasons. Fiber improves the glycemic response, slowing absorption of carbohydrates which results in lower blood sugar levels. Fiber also improves insulin sensitivity. Both of these responses lower the risk of high blood sugar and risk of diabetes, which damages the heart and circulation. Soluble fiber (e.g., oat bran or psyllium fiber) also lowers LDL cholesterol and thus the risk of coronary artery disease. Lastly, fiber helps you feel full so you may eat fewer calories, preventing obesity.

### Daily Fiber Recommendations

Unfortunately, about 95 percent of all Americans eat a low-fiber diet of only 10-15 grams a day. Yet, the amount of fiber recommended daily for good health is 25-38 grams per day.

### Fiber: Whole Grains vs. Refined Grains

The current fad of limiting bread and grains has lowered cereal-fiber intake. But not all grains are unhealthy. The kind of grains that people should avoid are foods like white bread, white rice, refined cereals, white pasta, and sweets and pastries made from white flour, not whole grains. Eating unrefined grains such as coarse, whole-grain bread, steel-cut oats, brown rice, and high fiber cereals will actually reduce your risk of heart disease and early mortality.

### Tips for Choosing Fiber-Rich Cereals and Foods

When buying cereal, look for options that have at least 5 grams of fiber per serving. Choose whole grain pasta and brown rice. Two sources of fiber that are especially healthy for the heart are oat bran and psyllium. When added to foods they lower blood sugar and blood cholesterol levels and contribute to heart health. Other whole grains include quinoa, dark rye, teff, and brown rice. These have also been shown to lower risk of heart disease.

In summary, by adding more whole grains into your diet and eliminating all refined grains and refined flours, you may be cutting your risk of future heart disease by a third or more, even if you already have a heart problem.

Source: <http://www.wellsources.com/articles-mhc/Cereal-Fiber-Protects-Against-Heart-Disease.html> *Start your day with a heart-healthy breakfast* By Dr. Don Hall, DrPH, CHES



**“Care for some freshly-ground fiber on your cheese fries?”**

Cartoon used with special permission from [glasbergen.com](http://glasbergen.com)