

# Eating for life

**There's a simple way to prolong life and reduce the risk of some diseases. And it doesn't require an expensive course of supplements or cutting back on calories.**

## What is a wholegrain?

Eating a little more brown rice, oats, corn and other tasty grains might help you live a longer and healthier life. These are all part of the wholegrain family – grains that contain three essential layers. Combined, these three layers are rich in soluble and insoluble fibre, protein, carbohydrates, omega-3 fatty acids, B group vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

Wholegrains are food in their natural state. During the food manufacturing process, these grains are often broken down to make them easier to prepare or digest. When wholegrains are refined and made into white flour and other cereals, some of the nutrient-rich layers are removed.

## What's the big deal?

Research from Harvard University shows that increasing the amount of wholegrains in a balanced diet can potentially lower the risk of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease (which affects the heart and blood vessels), and lower the rate of mortality. More than 100,000 people in the United States were monitored over more than a decade. Researchers found that for every 28g of wholegrains eaten daily, the risk of premature death was reduced by 5% and the rate of cardiovascular disease was reduced by 9%.

What's particularly notable was that this reduction in chronic illness was independent of other lifestyle and dietary factors such as weight, age and factors such as smoking and frequency of exercise.

Jean Hailes naturopath Sandra Villella points to the other benefits of wholegrains. These grains are a rich source of dietary fibre. They help the growth of good gut microbiota and digestive system health. High fibre diets help to quickly remove cancer-causing compounds in the bowel. The phytochemicals in wholegrains might also help reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes, according to research. A study found that eating two to three serves of wholegrains a day, compared to about one serve a week, dropped the chance of Type 2 diabetes by 20-30%.

## A balanced diet

A serving of wholegrains is simple to achieve. A serve is equivalent to around ½ cup of muesli, two slices of wholemeal bread or ½ cup of wholemeal pasta.

"It's important to include wholegrains as part of a balanced diet," says Ms Villella.

For people who are coeliac or gluten intolerant, they can still eat brown rice, corn or buckwheat (even though it's not a true grain, it's still a healthy choice).

The new healthy eating pyramid from Nutrition Australia, a non-profit organisation, recommends that around 70% of our diet consists of vegetables, fruit, legumes and grains.

## Simple swaps

Swap this... For this...



2 slices white bread



2 slices wholegrain bread



½ cup pasta



½ cup wholemeal pasta



1 packet potato chips



2 cups air-popped popcorn



½ cup white rice



½ cup brown rice



1 cup refined cereal



½ cup muesli



### More wholegrain recipes

[jeanhailes.org.au/contents/documents/Resources/Recipes/Banana\\_Breakfast\\_Bread.pdf](http://jeanhailes.org.au/contents/documents/Resources/Recipes/Banana_Breakfast_Bread.pdf)



## Barley Salad

### Ingredients

- 2 cups barley
- 4 cups water
- 1 red capsicum, diced finely
- 1 red onion, diced finely
- 1 bunch fresh mint, finely chopped
- 1 bunch flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 1 corn cob
- 1 large carrot, cut into thin strips
- 1 handful snow peas
- ½ cup almonds, roughly chopped

### Dressing

- Juice ½ large lemon
- 3-4 dessert spoons of tamari (wheat free soy sauce)
- 3 dessert spoons extra virgin olive oil

### Method

Place barley and water in saucepan, bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer with lid on for 20-25 minutes until the water is absorbed. Leave to sit in pot with lid on for a further 5 minutes.

Chop capsicum, onion, herbs and place in a large salad bowl. Steam the corn. Allow to cool slightly before using a knife to remove the corn kernels from the cob. Steam carrot and add the snow peas after a few minutes (vegetables should still be crisp). Add the cooked vegetables and chopped almonds to the salad.

Combine the dressing ingredients in a screw-top jar and shake with lid on to combine. Add the cooked barley to the salad bowl while still hot. Add the dressing and stir well to combine the flavours. This salad keeps well in the fridge and tastes even better the next day.

### Serving suggestions

Serve on its own or with feta, chicken or marinated tofu. The barley and almonds make up a complete protein serve but, if you like, you could add cooked Puy lentils for a vegetarian variation. This recipe works well for lunches served with canned fish or tofu.

Serves 4-6

### Nutritional information

Barley is an easy and tasty way to include wholegrains into your daily diet. This salad contains no animal fat, and incorporates a variety of vegetables including nutrient rich green leafy vegetables. The lemon juice in the dressing allows the iron from leafy vegetables, to be better absorbed.

This salad is also great for lowering cholesterol. Researchers from the University of Toronto developed a cholesterol-lowering diet called the 'Portfolio Diet' that was able to reduce cholesterol levels just as effectively as low dose statin drugs.