

# HEALTHY AGING



## CAN “HEALTHY” AND “AGING” REALLY GO TOGETHER?

Yes, absolutely! To be the best you can be as you age, the key is adopting strategies to help stay healthy and active for life. Healthy aging is powered by nutrition and physical activity.

Four strategies upon which all experts agree:

1. Eat healthfully with foods that supply quality, fiber-rich carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fats.
2. Stay physically active with daily exercise.
3. Stay mentally active and intellectually curious.
4. Stay socially active with friends and family and within your community.

## WHY ARE GRAIN FOODS SO IMPORTANT TO HEALTHY AGING?

Grain foods are the foods we love that love us back. Bread and grains are nutritionist approved. They are a part of every healthful eating plan, from the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) plan to the Mediterranean diet.

In fact, eating more whole grains actually may contribute to longevity! A recent analysis combining data from two studies with large numbers of adult men and women, found that higher whole grain intake was linked to reduced mortality, especially deaths due to cardiovascular disease.

Whole grains also provide anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory nutrients. While research is still emerging and further research is needed, a variety of plant-based compounds in whole grains may impact oxidative stress, suggesting that reducing oxidative stress by consuming whole grains is a likely mechanism for the protective effect from diseases associated with aging.

Fiber intake is another important concern for healthy aging, and one with which grain foods can play a big role. Dietary fiber from whole grains, as part of an overall healthy diet, can help improve blood cholesterol levels, and lower risk of heart disease, stroke, obesity and type 2 diabetes, so there are plenty of reasons to continue to enjoy grains. Many older adults overlook grains as a source of dietary fiber, yet grain foods contribute similar levels of fiber to the American diet as fruits and vegetables.

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for a  
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## HOW MUCH CARBOHYDRATE DO I NEED EVERY DAY?

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for carbohydrate is 130 grams/day for adults. This amount provides about 520 calories of energy. A slice of bread provides about 15 grams of carbohydrate, so including bread is well within the recommendation for daily carbohydrate.

## HOW MANY SERVINGS OF WHOLE GRAINS DO I NEED TO EAT?

Men above the age of 50 need 6 ounces of grains, and women over 50 need 5 ounces. Always remember that half of your daily serving of grains should be whole grains, so that's 3 ounces of whole grains per day for men and women over 50. One slice of whole wheat bread is the equivalent of a serving size of 1 ounce.

## I'M TRYING TO LOSE A LITTLE WEIGHT. SHOULDN'T I CUT BREAD OUT OF MY DIET? I'VE HEARD THAT BREAD IS JUST “EMPTY CALORIES.”

Bread is anything but “empty calories.” Grain foods are an important source of many nutrients your body needs, including fiber, protein, calcium and B-vitamins. Don't deprive yourself – or your health from the vital nutrients in grain foods. Enjoy bread again!

Know your stuff before you cut. When cutting food groups to jump on the latest diet craze, remember that what you substitute may be worse for your health in the long run. Cutting carbs and replacing with foods high in saturated fats may increase your risk for chronic diseases associated with aging. If you eliminate bread and replace with the added calories in some gluten-free alternatives, that can lead to weight gain.

Fad diets come and go, but bread is forever!

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## I'VE HEARD THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY THEY FEEL BETTER WHEN GOING GLUTEN-FREE AND GIVING UP FOODS LIKE BREAD. IS THIS SOMETHING THAT I SHOULD CONSIDER?

Don't sacrifice the bread you love. Healthy aging doesn't require gluten-free foods.

About 30% of adults say they are trying to cut out or avoid gluten in their diets, and while a small percentage of adults (about 1%) have celiac disease - a medically diagnosed reason to avoid gluten - healthy adults do not need to eliminate gluten, the protein in wheat. In fact, in a recent study on the gluten-free diet trend, researchers expressed concern that the avoidance of gluten may result in reduced consumption of beneficial whole grains, which may increase cardiovascular disease risk.

Gluten-free products are expensive. Plus, they don't taste like your favorite grain products. So, unless you are following medical advice to eliminate gluten completely from your diet, going gluten-free is not a strategy for healthy aging.

## WHY IS FIBER SO IMPORTANT TO MY DIET, NOW THAT I'M APPROACHING 70?

The fiber that grain foods like bread provide to the diet is important for several reasons.

First, dietary fiber from whole grains, as part of an overall healthy diet, can help improve blood cholesterol levels, and lower risk of heart disease, stroke, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Fibers found in breads also benefit gut health by serving as prebiotics. Prebiotics feed the healthy bacteria in your digestive tract, helping the beneficial bacteria to proliferate. This is important in disease prevention. Consumption of a high fiber diet is also a key component in the prevention of constipation, which can be particularly problematic in aging adults.

Dietary fiber has been identified as a nutrient of public health concern due to low consumption. Many older adults overlook grains as a source of dietary fiber, yet grain foods contribute similar levels of fiber to the American diet as fruits and vegetables.

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## WHAT NECESSARY NUTRIENTS DO GRAIN FOODS, LIKE BREAD, PROVIDE?

Grain foods are an important source of protein, calcium and B-vitamins, thiamin, riboflavin, and niacin. Whole grains and enriched grains also provide iron.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF MY BREAD CONTAINS WHOLE GRAINS?

Check the ingredient list and look for whole wheat flour as the first ingredient. Many whole wheat breads will also list "100% whole wheat" on the front of the package. Don't be fooled by words such as "5-grain bread" because there is no way to know if any of the grains are whole grains. That is why checking the ingredient list is the best way to know if your bread is whole grain.

## WHERE CAN I OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAINS IN HEALTHY AGING?

Please visit: [www.longlivegrains.org](http://www.longlivegrains.org)



**GRAIN FOODS  
FOUNDATION**

[LongLiveGrains.org](http://LongLiveGrains.org)