

# Whole Grains – Quick Tips for CPAs

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## Whole Grains

Whole grains are grains that include all parts of the grain kernel: the bran, germ, and endosperm which are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Whole grain consumption is linked to several positive health outcomes.

After assessing for the participant’s dietary and cultural preferences and barriers to whole grain consumption, use some of the ideas below to encourage WIC whole grain consumption.

*Remind participants to use the My Minnesota WIC app to scan and identify WIC-allowed whole grain products while shopping.*

## Tips for Transitioning to Whole Grains:

Many families are used to the smooth, soft texture and neutral taste of refined grains (e.g., white bread, flour tortillas, enriched pasta). Whole grains tend to be heavier with more texture and a distinct flavor. Encourage families to transition to whole grain items slowly:

- Start small by replacing one slice of white bread with a whole wheat option. Try different brands of WIC-allowed breads. Some brands are softer and may be more acceptable.
- Use whole wheat or whole grain corn tortillas for one meal per week and gradually increase the frequency.
- Mix whole wheat pasta with regular pasta, gradually increasing the proportion of whole wheat pasta. Add in favorite pasta sauce and toppings.
- Mix familiar and well-liked foods like mashed banana or applesauce in with small amounts of oatmeal, gradually increasing the proportion of oatmeal.

**Encourage parents to engage children in age-appropriate cooking activities**, like spreading peanut butter on whole wheat bread or adding healthy toppings to whole grain tortilla wraps or oatmeal. This hands-on experience promotes whole grain consumption and fosters ownership and curiosity, increasing children's enjoyment of and appreciation for whole grain options.

## Explore new ways to offer whole grains:

### Whole Wheat Bread

- Make French Toast. The eggs and milk add moisture and flavor. Serve with a sprinkle of cinnamon and a drizzle of maple syrup and a favorite fruit.
- Toast and top with peanut butter and fresh fruit. Sprinkle with cinnamon and honey.
- Use bread for grilled cheese sandwiches or toasted PB&J.

- Use bread as a base for mini pizzas. Add tomato sauce, cheese, and pizza toppings. Bake until cheese is melted, and bread is crisp.

## Whole Wheat or Whole Grain Corn Tortillas

- Fill tortillas with cheese and healthy ingredients like cooked meat, beans, or veggies. Microwave briefly. Served folded in half and cut in wedges or rolled up.
- Spread peanut butter on a tortilla, drizzle with honey, and sprinkle with sliced fruit. Roll up and enjoy.
- Fill tortillas with marinara sauce, shredded cheese, and toppings. Fold in half and bake until crispy for a homemade pizza-pocket.
- Fill tortillas with scrambled eggs, cheese, and cooked veggies. Roll up and serve with salsa. Try adding cooked brown rice and black beans.
- Cut tortillas into triangles, brush with oil, and bake until crispy. Serve with salsa.
- Soften tortillas in the microwave or oven, keep them warm wrapped in a towel, and use them as a bread substitute in meals. Roll up the tortillas as a fun way to eat them.

## Whole Wheat Pasta

- Pair whole wheat pasta with familiar sauces like tomato or cheese sauce.
- Add colorful vegetables to the pasta for added nutrition and visual appeal.
- Make a refreshing pasta salad with whole wheat pasta and diced vegetables and salad dressing.

## Oatmeal

- Offer fresh berries, sliced bananas, WIC cereal, or yogurt as oatmeal toppings. Add honey, maple syrup, cinnamon, or chocolate chips for an extra treat.
- Prepare Overnight Oats. Mix uncooked oats with milk or yogurt and refrigerate overnight for a ready-to-eat option. Enjoy with bananas or other favorite fruit.
- Use oatmeal in homemade energy balls or granola bars. Example of a [Granola Bar recipe](#).

Note: CPA Quick Tips for Brown Rice are on a separate handout.

## Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Granola Bars recipe \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/recipes/breads.html#granolabars\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/recipes/breads.html#granolabars)

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