

September is  
Whole Grains Month

Ask the Health Coach

Fresh & Healthy Recipe

September is  
Cholesterol  
Awareness Month

## September is Whole Grains Month

*Improve Your Whole Body Health*

Want to make a dramatic improvement to your health with one dietary change? Choose whole grains instead of refined grains whenever you can. Packed with nutrients like fiber, B vitamins, protein and antioxidants – and minerals like iron, copper, magnesium and zinc – a diet rich in whole grains reduces your risk for heart disease, type-2 diabetes, stroke and many cancers. What's more, the fiber from whole grains promotes intestinal health and helps manage weight by increasing the sense of fullness and satisfaction.

If you're ready to give whole grains a try, look for these common whole grain foods at your supermarket:

- 100% rye bread or crackers
- 100% whole-wheat bread
- Barley
- Brown rice
- Buckwheat (also known as kasha)
- Bulgur
- Millet
- Old-fashioned oats
- Popcorn
- Quinoa (pronounced "keen-wah")
- Whole-wheat cereal, crackers, pasta
- Wild rice

To find whole grains in prepackaged or processed foods like cereal, crackers and bread, read the ingredient list for the word "whole" listed before the grain; if it's listed as the first ingredient, it's an ideal whole grain product. You can also look on the package for the whole grain stamp of approval from the Whole Grain Council.

[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)  
[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)  
[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)

### The Right Amount

The US 2010 Dietary Guidelines recommend that at least half of our total grain intake should be from whole grains, which is a minimum of three servings per day. Sadly, only 10% of Americans heed this recommendation. A serving of grains is considered:

- One slice of bread
- One cup of cereal
- ½ English muffin or bagel
- One small roll, biscuit or muffin
- ½ cup cooked cereal, rice or pasta
- ¾ to one cup of a ready-to-eat breakfast cereal



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### Whole Grains *at a Glance*

There are three parts to the whole grain kernel: the bran layer, endosperm and inner germ. Refined grains (from white flour) contain the endosperm component only, which is the white, starchy part. While this provides energy for the body, we miss out on the health benefits found in the bran and germ. Whole grains are "whole" containing all parts of the grain which are packed with disease-fighting vitamins and minerals.

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### Making the Switch to Whole Grains

If you're not used to eating foods with whole grains, learning to enjoy them is a matter of retraining your taste buds. Here are some ways to work more whole grains into your daily diet:

- Choose whole grain breads, cereals, waffles, bagels and crackers. Look for at least 3 grams of fiber per serving on the food label.
- Gradually make the switch from white pasta to whole-wheat pasta (or white rice to brown rice) by combining the two at first.
- Experiment with new recipes using whole grains like quinoa, buckwheat and bulgur in pilafs, soups and salads. You can start with the Quinoa and Spinach Salad recipe in this newsletter!
- Use old-fashioned oats instead of instant oats for breakfast or an afternoon snack. Add some raisins and slivered almonds for natural sweetness and a dose of healthy Omega-3's.

- Keep a small container of cooked brown rice in the refrigerator and add a handful to salads, soups, sandwich wraps for texture and fiber benefits.
- Add whole grains to baked foods by substituting whole grain flour for all or part of the white flour, or replacing  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the white flour with whole grain oats.

Whole grain, fiber-rich foods are not as bland or boring as you may think. Just start small and be consistent and you'll be on your way to good health in no time. If you have little ones at home, introduce whole grains early to promote a lifetime of wellness.

For more information about healthy eating, browse WebMD's Lifestyle Improvement Program on Nutrition. Log in to **MyBlueService** from [www.bcbsfl.com](http://www.bcbsfl.com) and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Select **Wellness Programs** then Healthy Nutrition.

## Ask the Health Coach

**Q** What is the difference between soluble and insoluble fiber, and which type reduces cholesterol?

**A** Fiber is the indigestible portion of a plant that gives a plant its shape. Since fiber is not digested, it's calorie-free, and it helps you to feel full. There are two types of fiber and you need both. Soluble fiber dissolves in water and helps reduce bad cholesterol (LDL). It can be found in beans, peas, lentils, nuts, oatmeal, oat bran and fruits. Insoluble fiber does not dissolve in water. It cleans out your gut and reduces the risk for diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It can be found in whole-wheat, wheat bran, brown rice, bulgur, seeds and vegetables. Most plants contain both types of fiber.

Most Americans don't even come close to getting the recommended 25-35 grams of fiber per day. When adding fiber to your diet, take it slow and start with just a few extra grams of fiber each day to avoid constipation or gastrointestinal discomfort. Remember that fiber absorbs water, so be sure to increase your fluid intake, too.



# Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

## Spinach and Quinoa Salad

*For a fast, delicious and nutritious meal, serve this simple salad as a side or top it with grilled chicken or shrimp for the main course.*



### Ingredients:

2 cups water  
1 cup quinoa, rinsed  
1 package (6 oz.) fresh baby spinach, torn  
½ cup dried cranberries

### Dressing:

3 Tbsp. olive oil  
2 Tbsp. orange juice  
1 Tbsp. red wine vinegar  
1 Tbsp. maple syrup  
1 garlic clove, minced  
½ tsp. salt  
⅛ tsp. pepper  
1 green onion, finely chopped  
½ cup chopped pecans, toasted

### Directions:

In a small saucepan, bring water to a boil. Add quinoa. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 12-15 minutes or until water is absorbed. Remove from the heat; fluff with a fork.

In a large bowl, combine the warm quinoa, spinach and cranberries. For dressing, in a small bowl, whisk the oil, orange juice, vinegar, maple syrup, garlic, salt and pepper. Stir in onion. Pour over quinoa mixture; toss to coat. Sprinkle with pecans. Makes 10 servings.

### Nutritional analysis:

¾ cup equals 171 calories; 9g fat (1g saturated fat); 0 cholesterol; 136mg sodium; 20g carbohydrates; 2g fiber; 3g protein.

Looking for delicious, healthy recipes the whole family can enjoy? Check out our Healthy Recipes from WebMD! Simply log in to MyBlueService from [bcbsfl.com](http://bcbsfl.com) and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Click on **My Health Manager** and under **Healthy Fun**, select **Healthy Recipes**.

# September is Cholesterol Awareness Month

## *Balance your levels with a healthy lifestyle.*

Maintaining healthy cholesterol levels is a function of genetics, your liver, kidney and thyroid functions, and your lifestyle. While we have no control over our inherited traits, we can control our diet and physical activity, as well as our tobacco and alcohol use. This month, let's evaluate our lifestyle and consider how we treat our bodies and what we consume.

### What is cholesterol?

To understand how lifestyle affects your health, it's important to know how cholesterol works in your body. Our bodies make cholesterol naturally to make nutrients, build cells and aid digestion, but it's also found in animal foods such as beef, poultry, fish, eggs and dairy. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL) carry cholesterol throughout our arteries to vital organs. High-density lipoproteins (HDL) then shuttle the cholesterol back to the liver for recycling to keep cholesterol from building up in the bloodstream.

High cholesterol levels increase the risk for atherosclerosis, or hardened arteries, coronary artery disease and many other complications. Optimum LDL (bad cholesterol) levels are less than 100 mg/dL, and HDL (good cholesterol) levels are greater than 40 mg/dL for men and 50 for women. Your total cholesterol is a measure of your LDL, HDL and triglycerides, or fatty molecules found in the blood, and should be less than 200 mg/dL.

### The Perfect Balance

When there is too much LDL and not enough HDL in your blood, this imbalance causes health problems, including heart disease and stroke to name a few.

Find out how a few lifestyle changes can keep your levels balanced:

**Healthy Eating:** You can decrease your LDL by eating healthy foods like whole grains, fish, vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts (particularly walnuts), soy and seeds (ground flaxseed is a good choice). Increase your HDL by reducing the sugar in your diet and boosting your Omega-3 intake by adding fish to the menu a few times a week and filling your plate with purple-skinned fruits and green leafy veggies.



**Physical Activity:** Increase your HDL with regular physical activity like walking, biking and swimming. You don't have to be an Olympic athlete, but work up to at least 30 minutes a day, most days of the week.



**Healthy Lifestyle:** Keep your cholesterol in check by getting to and maintaining a healthy weight. A life-long commitment to eating right and staying physically active is the best way to do this. Also, if you smoke, quit. Smoking injures blood vessel walls and promotes the artery-hardening process.

You can make a huge difference in your health with just a few lifestyle changes. Start today, it's never too late!

[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

