

Whole grain consumption by teens and young adults falls short of guidelines

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Three daily servings of whole grains are recommended for prevention of type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, and excess weight gain. Yet few adolescents or young adults follow these guidelines, according to national survey data. In a study published in the February 2010 issue of the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, researchers from the School of Public Health, University of Minnesota report that young people are consuming less than 1 serving of whole grains per day. The study took an in-depth look at influencers, modifiable factors, and interventions that are critical for successfully addressing this gap.

Using the results of Project EAT (Eating Among Teens)-II, researchers analyzed the consumption of [whole grains](#) by 792 adolescents and 1,686 young adults between the ages of 15 and 23. There were 1,110 males (44.8%) and 1,368 females (55.2%) in the sample. Demographic characteristics were also collected to identify factors associated with daily intake of whole grains.

Daily whole-grain servings were estimated by summing the reported frequency of consuming dark bread (1 slice), kasha/couscous/bulgur, popcorn (1 small bag), hot breakfast cereal (1 bowl), and cold breakfast cereal (1 bowl).

The authors examined the associations of socio-environmental, personal, and behavioral factors with whole grain intake. For increased consumption, home availability of whole grains was the only socio-environmental factor, while a preference for the taste of whole-grain

bread and confidence that one could change or maintain their eating patterns to consume the recommended number of whole grain servings were the personal factors of importance. Among behavioral factors, fast-food consumption negatively affected whole grain consumption.

Writing in the article, Nicole I. Larson, PhD, MPH, RD, Research Associate, Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, and colleagues state, "The findings of this study indicate that interventions designed to promote improvements in whole-grain intake should address confidence to consume whole grains, taste preferences for whole-grain products, and the availability of these foods in settings where youth frequently eat meals (schools, home, and restaurants). Nutrition interventions should provide opportunities to taste a variety of whole-grain foods, including newly developed products such as white whole-wheat bread...In order to improve the availability of whole-grain breads and other products at home, parents as well as youth may need to be provided additional tools to help them identify and prepare whole-grain products. The observation of an inverse relationship between fast-food intake and whole grain intake further suggests there is a need to improve the availability of whole-grain products in restaurants."

More information: The article is "Whole-grain intake correlates among adolescents and young adults: Findings from Project EAT" by Nicole I. Larson, PhD, MPH, RD; Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, PhD, MPH, RD; Mary Story, PhD, RD; and Teri Burgess-Champoux, PhD, RD. It appears in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, Volume 110, Issue 2 (February 2010).

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