

# Could wholegrain foods aid our immune systems?

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University of Reading researchers are looking for volunteers for a new study which will examine the effects of wholegrain cereals on the immune system.

Studies have shown that this type of food, such as wholegrain breakfast cereals, breads, pasta, rice, may reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers and type 2 diabetes.

Recent research has suggested wholegrain also improves gut health by increasing the numbers of 'good bacteria' in the gut. This may have a beneficial impact on the immune system which weakens as we get older.

The Wholegrain and Immunity (WHIM) study will investigate what effect consuming whole-grain on a regular basis has on those who have a habitually diet low in wholegrain.

Antonios Ampatzoglou, a PhD student within the University's Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, is asking for middle-aged (40-65yr) men and women, with a BMI ranging between 25 and 35, who have less than one serving or 16g of whole-grain per day to participate in this important study.

Antonios said: "As we get older our immune system becomes weaker. Improving the numbers of [good bacteria](#) in the gut in middle-aged individuals may therefore offset the age-related decline in immunity. [Volunteers](#) will spend six weeks following a whole-grain diet and, after a break, six weeks following a refined-grain diet. During both the whole-grain diet and the refined-grain diet, volunteers will be provided with specific foods, including bread, pasta, rice, snacks and breakfast cereals, and asked to incorporate them into their diet in place of their usual foods.

"Bacteria in the gut can be roughly categorised as beneficial or unfavourable. At the end of each study, we will be counting the populations of certain bacterial genera in the samples and look at how these populations shift in relation to each other. We will, therefore, find out if a [diet](#) high in whole grain results in an increase in "good" bacteria numbers and/or a decrease in the numbers of "bad" bacteria. This will tell us whether individuals gain any benefit from whole-grain consumption in terms of the [immune system](#) and digestive [health](#)."

Provided by University of Reading

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