

# Popcorn: A Whole Grain and fiber Gold Mine

By Janet Bond Brill  
Ph.D., R.D., LDN

Who knew? Corn, the tiny kernel that most of the world calls maize (after the Spanish word *maiz*), is a bona fide whole grain, and yes, even the popped version counts. People who routinely snack on popcorn ingest a whopping 250 percent more whole grains and 22 percent more fiber compared to those who don't eat this dieter's delight. (Popcorn contains more fiber per ounce than even whole wheat bread and brown rice.) Eating whole grains, like popcorn, is key to heart health.

Studies show that people who eat a diet rich in whole grains are less likely to suffer a fatal heart attack.

Whole grains are one of the eight key food groups—along with extra virgin olive oil, leafy greens, figs and other fruits, lentils and other legumes, salmon and other seafood, walnuts and flaxseeds, and red wine—that are part of my plan (detailed in *Prevent a Second Heart Attack*) to reverse heart disease, or build good heart health to hopefully avoid heart troubles. Dark chocolate is a bonus food in this plan. Yeah!

Natural whole grains contain three botanically defined parts: the bran, the endosperm, and the germ (or embryo). Eat the whole seed, or “kernel,” with the three parts intact—the entire complex—and you are eating a complete whole grain that packs a powerful nutritional punch.

How can you ensure that what you buy at the grocery store is actually a whole grain? Look for words that signify whole grains in the ingredient list:

- The word “whole” listed before a grain such as “whole rye flour.”
- The term “100% whole wheat.”
- The words “berries” or “groats,” such as “wheat berries” or “oat groats.”
- The words “rolled oats” and “oatmeal.”
- “Brown rice” and “wild rice.”

Daily intake of whole grains are good for the heart. Consuming at least three servings of whole grains a day can boost your heart disease defense system by:

- Increasing your body's antioxidant level—whole grains are virtual antioxidant factories, housing a nice amount of vitamin E, the mineral selenium, and the polyphenol phenolic acids ferulic

acid and caffeic acid.

- Immunizing “bad” LDL cholesterol against free radical attack
- Lowering your “bad” cholesterol level thereby stabilizing vulnerable plaque
- Lowering your blood pressure
- Preventing and treating metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes. Eating whole-grains will lessen your risk of contracting metabolic syndrome—the constellation of metabolic disturbances that predisposes you to developing type 2 diabetes and accelerates atherosclerosis.
- Helping you control your weight. The high fiber and high water content of whole grains lessen weight gain by promoting satiety. Whole-grain foods also contain fewer calories than the equivalent weight of a refined grain.

*Janet Brill, Ph.D., R.D., LDN, is a leading diet, nutrition, and fitness expert. She is the author of *Prevent a Second Heart Attack and Cholesterol Down*. Learn more at [www.drjanet.com](http://www.drjanet.com).*



## Pet Talk



Gary Wingate, RPh, FIACP

## HOT WEATHER TIPS

The summer months bring long, hot days. Dogs and cats can suffer from the same problems that humans do—overheating, dehydration and even sunburn—when the mercury rises. By taking these simple precautions, you can protect your pet from the elements, and have fun all summer long.

✓ Never leave your pet alone in a vehicle. Even with the windows open, a parked car, truck or van can quickly become a furnace on a hot day—and overheating (heat prostration) can kill an animal. Parking in the shade offers little protection, as the sun shifts during the day.

✓ Always carry a gallon of cold water for your pet.

✓ Don't force your animal to exercise after a meal in hot, humid weather. Exercise in the early morning or the evening, and keep walks to a minimum.

✓ Never leave your dog standing on hot asphalt. Your dog's body can heat up quickly and his/her sensitive paw pads can burn.

✓ Do not take an animal to the beach unless you can provide a shaded spot and plenty of fresh water to drink. Rinse your pet off after being in the salt water.

✓ It's smart to provide plenty of shade and a well-constructed doghouse for animals staying outside. Bring your dog inside during the hottest part of the day, and make sure your dog has plenty of cool water. Keep cats indoors.

✓ Be extra sensitive to old and overweight animals in hot weather. Snub-nosed dogs such as bulldogs, pugs, Boston terriers, Lhasa apsos and shihtzus, as well as those with heart or lung diseases, should be kept cool in air-conditioned rooms as much as possible.

✓ Avoid walking your dog in areas that you suspect have been sprayed with insecticides or other chemicals. Be alert for coolant or other automotive fluid

leaking from your vehicle. Animals are attracted to the sweet taste, and ingesting just a small amount can be fatal. Call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Center at (888) 4ANIMAL-HELP if you suspect your animal has been poisoned.

✓ Bring your animal to the veterinarian for a spring or early summer check-up, including a test for heartworm, if your dog isn't on year-round preventative medication. Ask your doctor to recommend a safe pest-control program to combat fleas and ticks.

✓ Keep your animal well-groomed to stave off summer skin problems. Shaving a heavy-coated dog's hair to a one-inch length helps prevent overheating. Don't shave the hair down to the skin, however, or you will rob your dog of protection from the sun. Cats should be brushed often.

✓ To prevent escape and accidental falls, make sure all windows in your home are properly screened.

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