

# Food & Fun After School ~ 2nd Edition ~

## Parent Communications Unit 5: Whole Grains

### About Parent Engagement

Engaging with families in after school time is associated with increased family involvement in children's education and school, improved relationships between parents and children, and improved implementation and outcomes for afterschool programs\*.

This Parent Communication packet contains Parent Engagement Activities, a Newsletter Article, and an Email Message for you to use with each Food & Fun unit. These tools are intended to help you connect with and educate parents on the key messages in Food & Fun.

It is important to engage parents on a regular basis in a variety of ways. Here are some ways that programs have engaged parents at after school:

- Have a conversation with parents at pick up
- Create a bulletin board with the key messages from each Food & Fun unit
- Involve parents in daily physical activities and snack time
- Hold regularly scheduled events each month

(\*Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School. A Joint Publication of: United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Harvard Family Research Project, and Build the Out-Of-School Time Network.)

### Parent Engagement Activities

*Experiment and be creative- come up with your own ideas or modify the activities below to engage parents at your after school program!*

- **Healthy cereal taste test.** Invite parents to participate in a healthy cereal taste test. Look for whole grain cereals with 5 grams or less of sugar and more than 3 grams of fiber. A few examples are Kix™, Cheerios™, Kashi Heart to Heart™, and Wheaties™. Show parents and kids that cereals can be healthy AND taste good!
- **Hold a whole wheat pancake breakfast!** If you serve kids before school, invite parents to a whole wheat pancake breakfast. Alternatively, have an upside down day with breakfast for dinner!) Try out the recipe in the Food

& Fun Recipe Packet. Make extra copies of the recipes to give out to parents so they can make them at home!

- **Whole grain options are available for the same price as refined grains!** Display a few examples of whole grains foods that can be purchased for the same price as refined grain options. Include the price tag in the display! For example, whole wheat crackers like Triscuits™, whole wheat bread or pita, and/or whole wheat tortillas. Shop around and see what other whole grain options you can find at a low price!

### Newsletter Article

*Use this article in your organization's publications. Be sure to include the credit "Provided by Harvard Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity and YMCA of the USA."*

### **Get the Whole Story on Whole Grains**

What are whole grains? Examples are whole wheat bread, whole wheat pastas, whole oats, brown rice, cornmeal, and cracked (bulgur) wheat.

This month your child will explore the world of whole grains through arts and crafts, taste testing, and other activities.

The key messages for parents are:

- Whole grain breads and cereals help you feel full longer, and are packed with fiber and other nutrients.
- Refined grains (white bread, muffins, pasta, and white rice) aren't as nutritious as whole grains (whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, and brown rice).
- Serve whole grain breads and cereals that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving and no more than 5 grams of sugar per serving whenever possible.

The key messages for kids are:

- Whole grains are important because they help you feel full longer and make your body healthy.
- Eat whole grains (like whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat crackers and brown rice) instead of refined grains (like white bread, muffins, pasta, and white rice) whenever possible.
- Breakfast is a great time to try whole grains. Try whole grain cereals, waffles, bread, or bagels.

Whole grains contain fiber, vitamin E, and healthy fats. Whole grains help keep

your blood sugar under control, arteries clear, and they also make you feel full longer. Eating a diet rich in whole grains can lower your risk for heart disease and diabetes. While these diseases are mostly seen in adults, they are becoming more common in children too. Refined grains (like white bread, white rice, and pasta) do not have the nutrients or health benefits of whole grains. Eat whole grain products instead of refined ones whenever possible!

When shopping for grains for your family, purchase foods made from whole grains. There are many whole grain options available for the same price as refined options, like whole wheat bread, whole wheat pitas, whole grain crackers, whole grain cereals, and whole wheat tortillas. Select whole grain foods by looking for key words on the food labels and ingredient list. Here's how you do it:

**Read the nutrition label.** Choose 100% whole grain or whole wheat breads and cereals that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving and no more than 5 grams of sugar per serving.

**Read the ingredient list.** Choose breads and cereals that list a whole grain first. Examples are whole wheat, barley, oats, rye, brown rice, whole cornmeal, and millet.

**Watch out for misleading terms.** Foods that are “multi-grain,” “100% wheat,” “made with whole grains,” and “seven grain,” often are *not* made with mostly whole grains. Check the ingredient list to make sure that a whole grain is listed first!

**Watch out for added sugar.** There is a lot of sugar hiding in breakfast cereals, flavored yogurt, cookies, breakfast bars and other packaged foods. Choose foods and drinks without sugar as one of the first 3 ingredients. Remember sugar comes in different forms: corn syrup, dextrose, fructose... they are all just sugar!

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***Optional sidebar:***

Examples of whole grain breakfast cereals that are higher in fiber and low sugar.

Cereal	Fiber (grams per serving)	Sugar (grams per serving)
Wheat Chex™	5 g fiber	5 g sugar
Cheerios™	3 g fiber	1 g sugar
Total™	3 g fiber	5 g sugar
Wheaties™	3 g fiber	4 g sugar

## Email Message

*Use this sample message to communicate with parents by email.*

Subject: Healthy Habits Power Tips—Go for Whole Grains

Dear *(insert program)* Parents,

This month your children will explore the world of whole grains through arts and crafts, taste testing, and other activities.

The key messages for parents are:

- Whole grain breads and cereals are filling and are packed with fiber and other nutrients.
- Refined grains (white bread, muffins, pasta, and white rice) aren't as nutritious as whole grains (whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, and brown rice).
- Serve whole grain breads and cereals that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving and no more than 5 grams of sugar per serving whenever possible.

The key messages for kids are:

- Whole grains are important because they help fill you up and make your body healthy.
- Eat whole grains (like whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat crackers and brown rice) instead of refined grains (like white bread, muffins, pasta, and white rice) whenever possible.
- Breakfast is a great time to try whole grains. Try whole grain cereals, waffles, bread, or bagels.

Whole grain breads and cereals are packed with fiber, vitamins, minerals and flavor. They keep you feeling full longer, and can lower your risk for heart disease and diabetes.

You can help your family enjoy whole grains by following these **Healthy Habits Power Tips**:

**Read the nutrition label.** Choose 100% whole grain or whole wheat breads and cereals that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving and no more than 5 grams of sugar per serving.

**Read the ingredient list.** Choose breads and cereals that list a whole grain first. Examples are whole wheat, oats, brown rice, rye, barley, whole cornmeal, and millet.

**Watch out for misleading terms.** Foods that are “multi-grain,” “100% wheat,” “made with whole grains,” and “seven grain,” often are *not* made with mostly whole grains. Check the ingredient list to make sure that a whole grain is listed first!

**Watch out for hidden added sugar.** There is lots of sugar hiding in “healthy” packaged foods like breakfast cereals, flavored yogurt, and breakfast bars. Choose foods and drinks without sugar as one of the first 3 ingredients. Sugar comes in different forms: corn syrup, dextrose, fructose... they are all just sugar!

**Be a good role model.** Serve whole grains with meals and snacks.

Check out the following links for information on whole grains.

Harvard School of Public Health:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/carbohydrates/>

Nemours Foundation: [http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition\\_fit/nutrition/sugar.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/nutrition/sugar.html)

USDA: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/grains.html>