



Whole Grains in School Meals


Kids get more whole grains by participating in the school meal program!


Understanding the Term Whole Grain-Rich


For school year 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, at least 80% of grains served must be whole grain-rich. The term whole grain-rich means that 50% or more of the grain must be whole and the remaining grains, if any, must be enriched.



Why Start Whole Grains in Childhood?

 Childhood is the best time to teach healthy eating habits to familiarize children with the flavors and textures of whole grains.

 Children who eat whole grains regularly tend to carry these habits with them into adulthood.

 Research shows strong and consistent support that regular consumption of whole grains is associated with reduced risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, constipation and certain cancers.²

Kids Get More Whole Grains with School Meals¹

- Children’s daily intakes of whole grains fall below recommended intakes; however, school meals can help move children closer to the recommendations.
- School lunch participants consumed more than 50 percent of their daily whole grain intake at lunch.
- School meal participants’ 24-hour diets continued to receive higher HEI scores for whole grains compared with nonparticipants.

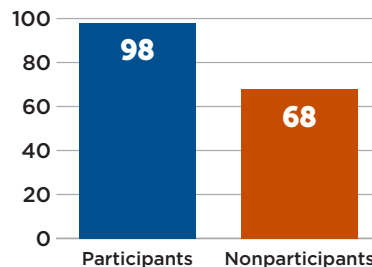


Healthy Eating Index (HEI)

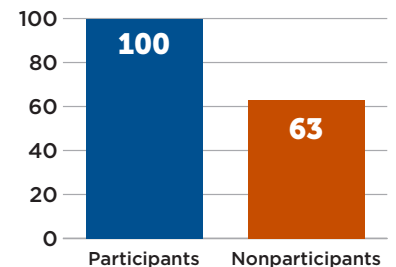
A measure of nutritional quality used to assess alignment with recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. HEI is scored with a maximum total score of 100. The higher the score the higher the nutritional quality aligns with the Dietary Guidelines.

- HEI scores of whole grains for both the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) showed school meal participants were more likely to meet the daily recommendation for whole grains.

HEI Score for Whole Grains: Breakfast Consumed



HEI Score for Whole Grains: Lunch Consumed



Those who participated in the SBP and NSLP had higher HEI scores for whole grain versus nonparticipants. This indicates the school meal program better aligns with whole grain recommendations in the DGAs versus other breakfast and lunch options.

1. Fox, et al. "School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study, Final Report Volume 4: Student Participation, Satisfaction, Plate Waste, and Dietary Intakes." Alexandria, VA: Office of Policy Support, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, April 2019.

2. Health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries, 1990–2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 Lancet 2019; 393: 1958–72.