The Nutritional Benefits of Wheat and Wheat-Based Foods

Wheat is one of the most widely consumed cereal grains globally, offering essential nutrients that support overall health and well-being. From flour and semolina to wheat-based foods like bread and pasta, wheat provides important nutritional benefits as part of a balanced diet.

Wheat delivers what you need. It's more than just carbohydrates — it also provides fibre, plant-based protein, and key vitamins and minerals that support overall nutrition and performance.

WHEAT HAS WHAT YOU NEED!

Wheat-based foods offer a wide range of nutritional benefits. Enriched wheat foods help address common nutrient gaps, like iron, B vitamins and folic acid, making them a valuable tool in public health nutrition strategies.

Whole wheat foods contain dietary fibre to support gut and digestive health, cardiovascular function and disease risk reduction.

The versatility of wheat-based foods, combined with their nutritional density, makes them an excellent choice for individuals seeking to optimize their health while enjoying satisfying, flavorful meals.

Learn more: Wheat Basics
whataboutwheat.ca/wheat-basics/

FIBRE CONTENT: A DIGESTIVE POWERHOUSE

Wheat is a great source of dietary fibre, especially in its whole grain form. This fibre supports regular bowel movements, helps lower blood cholesterol levels and is associated with a lowered risk of cardiovascular disease.

The fibre in wheat helps create bulk in stools which promotes good digestive health. Fibre also feeds gut bacteria and promotes healthy digestion as it helps to slow digestion and regulates blood glucose levels after a meal. Dietary fibre promotes satiety or fullness and can help meet weight management goals.

6.0 g fibre per 1 cup

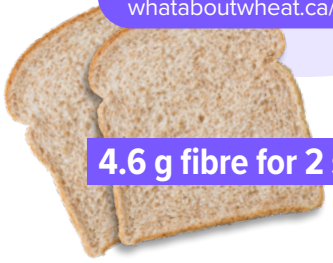
SUPPORTING GUT HEALTH

Research consistently shows that wheat plays an important role in supporting gut health. The fibre in wheat acts as a prebiotic, feeding beneficial gut bacteria and encouraging their growth. This helps maintain a healthy digestive system, supports immune function, and may reduce disease risk.

Learn more: Gut Health
whataboutwheat.ca/wheat-nutrition/gut-health/

Fibre recommendations: Adults should aim for 10 g of dietary fibre per meal to reach their daily target of 25-38 g per day.

Learn More: Fibre
whataboutwheat.ca/wheat-nutrition/fibre/



4.6 g fibre for 2 slices

WHAT ABOUT WHEAT?

PLANT-BASED PROTEIN SOURCE

Popular wheat-based foods, like pasta and bread, offer 6-8 g of protein per serving, regardless of whether they're made from whole grain or white flour. Including these everyday staples can be a practical and accessible way to help meet daily protein needs—especially in diets where plant-based options are common.

Learn more: Gluten – a plant-based protein
whataboutwheat.ca/wheat-nutrition/gluten/

PASTA IS A LOW GLYCEMIC FOOD

Pasta is a carbohydrate-rich food and a unique example of a wheat-based food with a low glycemic index, typically between 47 and 55. This is considered low on the glycemic scale. The presence of gluten—a naturally occurring plant protein in wheat—contributes to pasta's dense structure, which slows the digestion and absorption of carbohydrates. This means pasta won't spike blood sugars as much as other refined grain foods leaving a fuller feeling for longer.

Learn more: Wheat & Diabetes
whataboutwheat.ca/wheat-nutrition/diabetes/

RESISTANT STARCH

Retrogradation is a process where starch molecules in food realign and form tightly organized structures called resistant starch. This occurs, for example, when cooked pasta is refrigerated or bread is frozen. Resistant starch slows digestion, supports more stable blood sugar levels, and promotes satiety. Emerging research is also exploring its potential benefits for gut health and the microbiome.

Read more about it here:
https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38282825/
https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19562607/

NUTRIENT DENSITY

Whole wheat foods deliver more than fibre and energy; they naturally contain a range of essential nutrients that support overall health. They are particularly rich in B vitamins such as thiamin, niacin, and folate, which play key roles in energy metabolism and nervous system function. Whole wheat also provides important minerals like magnesium, phosphorus, and iron, all of which contribute to muscle function, oxygen transport, and bone health. Including whole wheat products in the diet is a practical and delicious way to increase intake of these foundational nutrients.

Learn More: Whole Grains
whataboutwheat.ca/wheat-nutrition/whole-grains/

SATIETY

The fibre and protein content in wheat foods promote fullness and satiety, which can support weight management goals. Whole wheat foods help individuals feel fuller longer after meals, which may reduce overall caloric intake.

POST-WORKOUT FUEL

Wheat-based foods are a valuable part of an active lifestyle, offering complex carbohydrates that provide steady energy before, during, and after exercise. Pre-workout meals or snacks made with enriched wheat flour, like bagels or tortillas, are easy to digest and help fuel performance. After a workout, fibre-rich options like whole wheat pasta, couscous and bread support recovery by restoring energy stores, and contribute to muscle repair.

Learn More: Fuel your workout
whataboutwheat.ca/faq/can-wheat-enhance-your-workout-and-recovery/

CARDIOVASCULAR SUPPORT

Whole grain wheat foods provide cardiovascular benefits through their fibre content and nutrient profile. Regular consumption of whole wheat foods have been associated with reduced risk of cardiovascular disease. The fibre in wheat helps lower cholesterol levels, while the complex carbohydrates provide sustained energy and modulate spikes in blood sugar.

Learn more: Heart Health whataboutwheat.ca/wheat-nutrition/heart-health/

What About Wheat? is brought to you by the Canadian Wheat Nutrition Initiative (CWNI), a group that knows wheat from farm to fork. CWNI members include grower associations and millers from across Canada. Find out more at **www.whataboutwheat.ca**

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