**Day 9**

**Title: Glorious Grains**

The grains food group includes foods that are made from wheat, barley, rice, oats, cornmeal, or any other type of cereal grains. Some of these foods include bread, tortillas, and cereal. It also includes other grains that are somewhat new to the United States market, including quinoa, millet, teff, and spelt.

**How many servings of grains should I eat each day?**

Like with all the other foods groups, the number of servings of grains you need each day depends on your age, gender, and how much physical activity you get. Half of your servings of grains should come from whole grains.

[CALLOUT] Based on your age, sex, and general activity level, you need [X] servings of grains each day. [/CALLOUT]

**What counts as a serving?**

Servings of grain are measured in what’s called ounce equivalents. Because there is so much variety in how grain products are made, an ounce equivalent is a way to compare the amount of grains you get from different foods. A one ounce equivalent of grains can be any one of these foods:

* 1 slice of sandwich bread
* ½ cup cooked oatmeal
* 1 packet of instant oatmeal
* 1 cup of breakfast cereal
* 1 small flour or corn tortilla (6 inches in diameter)
* ½ cup cooked rice
* ½ cup cooked spaghetti
* 3 cups popcorn

**Are there any kinds of grains I should avoid?**

There really aren’t any kinds of grains on the forbidden list, as long as you don’t have an allergy or sensitivity to them. But it’s best to make most of your grains whole grains. Refined grains aren’t completely off limits, but it’s best to eat them in moderation.

Grains can be categorized as either whole grains or refined grains, depending upon how they were processed. When grains are refined, the outer parts of the grain are removed. This gives the grain a smoother texture and makes it cook more quickly. This process also removes a lot of the important vitamins, minerals, and fiber from the grain. White rice and breads made from white flour are examples of these types of refined grains.

Whole grains have not gone through a refining process. Whole wheat, brown rice, and oatmeal are examples of whole grains. Since these grains are still intact, they have their natural vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

**Watch your portions**

While you’re watching your refined grains, also watch your portion sizes. Many baked goods use refined grains. Really big bagels and muffins are popular right now, and you may be getting more servings than you realize. For example, a large bagel is actually 4 servings of grain. A large muffin (one that’s 3.5 inches in diameter) is 3 servings of grain. While these are tasty, they pack a lot of calories, very little fiber, and few nutrients.

**How can I eat more whole grains?**

Most people eating a Western-style diet do not eat the recommended amount of whole grains each day. Whole grains have a lot of important nutrition, so you can feel free to eat all your grain servings as whole grains. Letting half of your grains be whole grains is a good starting point.

Food manufacturers have started replacing refined grains with whole grains. This means there are more options to help you choose whole grains. Look for whole grain spaghetti and pasta instead of regular varieties. Or, try brown rice instead of white rice. When you use breadcrumbs in a recipe, replace your regular white bread crumbs with whole grain bread crumbs.

Figure out which foods have whole grains in them by looking at the ingredients list on the food label. Look for the words “whole-grain” or “whole” in the **first** ingredient on the list. Many times food manufacturers will use words like “multi-grain,” “100% wheat,” or “stone-ground” in the food name or somewhere in the description. But don’t be fooled-- these words do not mean that the food is made from whole grains.

**A final word**

Grains are an important part of your balanced diet. Try to get as many servings as possible from whole grains, not refined grains. This change will help you to get more fiber, more B vitamins, and more necessary minerals. Whole grain foods may also help you stay fuller longer, thanks to their fiber content. Keep an eye out for places in your meals where you can swap refined grains for whole grains.

**Sources:**

Reicks, M., Jonnalagadda, S., Albertson, A. M., & Joshi, N. (2014). Total dietary fiber intakes in the US population are related to whole grain consumption: results from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2009 to 2010. *Nutrition Research*, *34*(3), 226–234. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.nutres.2014.01.002>

USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. (2015, July 27). All About the Grains Group. Retrieved August 22, 2015, from <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/grains>