

CHOOSING HEALTHY CEREALS



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Breakfast provides the energy to fuel the brain and the body. If you enjoy cereal, here are some tips on choosing a healthy cereal.

- 1) **Check the first ingredient:** It should say whole grain or bran. Some cereals have a mix of whole and refined grains. If you see milled corn, corn meal, wheat flour or rice in the list of ingredients, you're getting a mixture of whole and refined grains. Whole grain cereals are not as rapidly digested and absorbed as white or enriched grains. Therefore, you'll feel full longer. Be careful of popular kid's cereals which claim they contain whole grains. Remember, these cereals may still be high in sugar.
- 2) **Check if the ingredients contain the words "partially hydrogenated" in it?** If so, put the box back on the shelf. Hydrogenated oils and trans fats are unhealthy for your heart. Even if the food label states it contains "0 trans fat", it can actually still have it. That's because if the food contains less than 0.5 grams of trans fat, the food company can state their product contains zero trans fat. If the cereal contains "hydrogenated oils", then you can be certain it contains trans fat. Many popular brands have removed partially hydrogenated fats from their cereals but some favorite cereals for kids still have it.
- 3) **Check the fiber content.** Choose cereals with 5 grams of fiber or more per serving. Many cereals with 100% whole grains and those made from bran have much higher amounts of fiber. Fiber helps you stay full longer, controls hunger, stabilizes blood sugars and helps maintain a healthy digestive system. Most kid's cereals have very little to no fiber. If you can't find a cereal your child likes that contains 5 grams of fiber or more, get those that have at least 3 grams.
- 4) **Check for added sugars.** You want cereals with little or none. Cereals with raisins or other dried fruits will be higher in sugar content because sugar is naturally occurring in fruits. However, the sugar from fruits is not separated out from added sugars, so you can only guess the amounts. Fruits are usually added in low-fiber cereals. Therefore, it is a better option if you toss in your own fresh or dried fruits to high fiber cereals. Look for cereals with less than 10 grams of sugar per serving (when choosing cereals without fruit). Some cereals have high fructose corn syrup (HFCS). This is a form of added sugar. Check to see that the ingredients don't contain HFCS.
- 5) **Don't be fooled by cereals that claim to help you lose weight.** Majority of cereals are low in fat anyway. There is nothing special about these cereals. Many are low in fiber as well. For weight loss, consider choosing cereals high in fiber and low in sugar to help you stay full.

Still having difficulty giving up your favorite frosted cereal? Consider mixing cereals. Mix in a high fiber, whole grain cereal with fruit to your frosted cereal. Any steps you take to reducing sugar and increasing fiber in your cereal bowl is a good step!



Yikes! That's too much sugar!

Best Choices for Cereals
Cereals with "whole grain" or "bran" as the first ingredient
Sugar – less than 10 grams (cereals with fruit will have more sugar)
Fat – less than 3 grams
No hydrogenated oils or high fructose corn syrup
Fiber – 5 or more grams