

# Healthcare - Whole Grains For Healthy Hearts

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(NAPSI)-"Lower your cholesterol." If this is a phrase you've been hearing from your doctor, you may like to know that a healthy diet is the first step toward lowering your cholesterol. Fortunately, the American Heart Association has tools that can help you quickly and confidently find heart-healthy foods when grocery shopping.

Whole-grain foods that are high in fiber are an important part of a cholesterol-lowering diet. However, shopping for whole-grain foods can be confusing. That's why the association added the whole-grain category to its Food Certification Program.

"This simple whole-grains certification mark is an easy and reliable tool for consumers," said Penny Kris-Etherton, R.D., Ph.D., professor of nutrition at Pennsylvania State University. "In fact, I use it myself."

The heart-check mark is the first third-party symbol that requires a whole-grain product to be at least 51 percent whole grain by weight and meet minimum daily dietary fiber content criteria, as well as be low in saturated fat and dietary cholesterol.

## Free Grocery List Builder

You can save time shopping by first visiting [heartcheckmark.org](http://heartcheckmark.org) to use the free grocery list builder tool. Click on "My Grocery List" and browse through approximately 800 foods certified by the American Heart Association. Products are organized by food manufacturer and by categories such as breads, dairy case, frozen foods, fruits and vegetables, meats, snacks and more.

## Heart-Healthy Eating Tips

- Emphasize high-fiber foods such as whole wheat, oats and oatmeal, rye, barley and corn. Also include popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat, bulgur (cracked wheat) and millet.
- Choose breads and other foods that list whole grains as the first item in the ingredient list.
- Aim for about 25 grams of fiber each day.
- Select foods low in artery-clogging saturated and trans fat, as well as dietary cholesterol.
- Include five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Focus on lean meats, poultry and low- or no-fat dairy products.
- Eat fish twice a week.
- Know how many calories you need.

To learn more about reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke through healthy lifestyle changes, visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) or call (800) AHA-USA1 for a free copy of the "Shop Smart with Heart" brochure.