BREAKFAST CEREALS AND DIETARY FIBRE

Breakfast cereals (ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, muesli and oats) are a top source of dietary fibre and whole grains for Australians, while being low in kilojoules and nutrient dense.

In Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics data showed breakfast cereals provided 10.6% of daily fibre intake per capita.\(^1\) For Australians who consumed breakfast cereals, breakfast cereals provided 22% (adults) and 18% (children) of their daily fibre intake.\(^2\)

Breakfast cereals also provided 40% of Australians daily whole grain intakes,\(^3\) and are nutrient dense.

Regular consumption of high-fibre breakfast cereals is associated with:
- improved bowel health;
- reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease; and
- improved satiety.

Higher intakes of cereal fibre are associated with a reduced risk of premature death from cancer, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and diabetes.

People eating the most cereal fibre had a reduced risk of worsening pain from knee osteoarthritis.

Research suggests that the fibre from cereal foods may be more protective to our health than the fibre from vegetables.

Improved bowel health

The relationship between insoluble fibre and bowel health has been well established:
- Eating high-fibre wheat-based breakfast cereals helps to prevent constipation and improves bowel function (Grade A).\(^4\) and
- Consuming one to three serves of high-fibre cereal foods per day is associated with reduced risk of colorectal cancer in adults (Grade C).\(^4\)
- Resistant starch in some grain foods may help protect the colon\(^5\) and promote a healthy gut microbiome.\(^6\)

Reduced risk of type 2 diabetes

Consuming breakfast cereals rich in whole grains and soluble fibre can improve blood glucose levels and may reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes:
- Regular consumption of whole grain and high-fibre breakfast cereals is associated with a reduced risk of diabetes (Grade B).\(^4\)
- Consumption of high-fibre breakfast cereals, especially those high in soluble fibre, may assist in the management of hyperglycaemia in people with diabetes (Grade C).\(^4\) and
- Consumption of cereal foods (especially three serves a day of whole grains) is associated with reduced risk of type 2 diabetes (Grade B).\(^5\)

Reduced risk of CVD and reduced cholesterol

The association between consuming breakfast cereals rich in soluble fibre and cardiovascular disease has been examined by several large scientific reviews. In summary:
- Regular consumption of oat-, barley- or psyllium-based breakfast cereals (cereals rich in soluble fibre) can help lower total and LDL cholesterol levels (Grade A).\(^4\) and
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– Consumption of cereal foods (especially whole grains and those with fibre from oats or barley) is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease in adults (Grade B).5

Reduced risk premature death from diet-related chronic diseases

Recent studies concluded:

– People who consumed the greatest amount of cereal fibre had a 19% reduced risk of death from all causes and a reduced risk of premature death from a range of chronic disease including cancer (15%), cardiovascular disease (18-20%),7,8 respiratory disease (21%) and diabetes (34%).7
– The protective effects of whole grains may be due, at least in the main part, to its cereal fibre component;7
– Cereal fibre was more protective than the fibre from vegetables;9
– People consuming a high fibre diet (27-35g/day) had a 23-37% lower risk of total mortality compared to those with relatively low fibre intakes [15g-17/day];9,10 and
– Each additional 10g of fibre per day, lowered the risk of death from all causes by 11%.10

Reduced risk of knee osteoarthritis

Recent research using data from two US studies concluded that eating more fibre was associated with a lower risk of painful knee osteoarthritis. In one study, the risk was 30% lower among those eating more fibre, in the other, there was a 60% reduced risk of developing the condition.11

People with the highest intakes of cereal fibre also had a 14% reduced risk of worsening of osteoarthritis knee pain.11

Improved satiety

The totality of evidence suggests that regular consumption of high-fibre breakfast cereals is associated with improved satiety. In summary:

– Consumption of high-fibre breakfast cereals improves satiety and may reduce self-assessed hunger after a meal by up to 76%;4 and
– Eating breakfast cereal high in insoluble fibre (like those with wheat bran) may result in less kilojoules consumed at breakfast and lunch, possibly due to the high satiety value.12

Good source of fibre, whole grains and nutrient dense

– The 2011-12 Australian Health Survey (AHS) showed breakfast cereals (ready-to-eat and hot porridge styles) provided 10.6% of fibre intakes per capita for Australians two years and over, while contributing very little to kilojoules (energy 4.6%), total sugars (3.4%) and sodium (around 2%) intakes.1
  – For breakfast cereal consumers, breakfast cereals provided 22% (adults) and 18% (children) of their daily fibre intakes.2
  – Breakfast cereal consumers had higher total daily intakes of fibre (19% higher for adults, 15% higher for children) than those who ate other breakfasts.2
– A secondary analysis of the 2011-12 AHS found cereal (grain) foods to be the top source of fibre in the Australian diet, and breakfast cereals were the top source for high-fibre eaters.13
– Adults are recommended to consume at least 25-30g of fibre each day.14 An average 40g serve of ready-to-eat cereal, muesli or oats contains around 4g of fibre,15 with some higher fibre options containing around 13g a serve, making breakfast cereals a valuable source of this important nutrient.
– Around 85% (or more than 370) breakfast cereals on Australian supermarket shelves contained either a source, good source or excellent source of fibre according to Food Standards Australia and New Zealand criteria (≥2g/serve, ≥4g/serve or ≥7g/serve respectively).15,16
– Breakfast cereals are important dietary sources of whole grains with more than 70% (or more than 308) breakfast cereals meeting the whole grain content claim criteria set by the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council.15
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References


Interpreting evidence grades

According to NHMRC guidance, Grade A evidence is to be trusted to guide clinical practice, Grade B is to be trusted to guide practice in most situations, Grade C provides some support but care should be taken in its application, and Grade D is suggestive, where the body of evidence is weak and therefore the statement should be applied with caution.

About the Australian Breakfast Cereal Manufacturers Forum (ABCMF)

ABCMF is committed to providing the most up-to-date information for both the Australian public and professionals, as well as correcting misinformation about Australian breakfast cereals. The ABCMF is a forum of the Australian Food and Grocery Council.

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