

## Tips for selecting a nutritious cereal

With all the cereals on the market making nutritional claims, how do you select a cereal? Reading the nutrition label is helpful, but even that can be confusing. The following are some tips for selecting cereals:

1. Choose a product made from unrefined or whole grain. Refined products lose nutrients not replaced by enrichment such as magnesium, manganese, chromium, and copper. Look for the word **whole**. Whole wheat, whole wheat kernel, whole grain barley, whole wheat flour, or rolled oats are products that contain the whole grain. Words like degermed, oat flour, or unbleached flour are not made from the whole grain. Most cooked cereals are whole grain and are very inexpensive per serving.
2. Avoid cereals with a lot of sugar. Sucrose and other sugars should be relatively low: 6 grams or less per serving (1 teaspoon = 4 grams). Dried fruits, however, will increase the sugar to about 10 grams per serving but do provide other vitamins, minerals, and fiber. One money saving idea is to buy plain cereals (hot or cold) and add your own dried or fresh fruits.
3. Look at carbohydrate information on the label. Starch and related carbohydrates should be relatively high.
4. Check sodium content. Cereals with **low amounts** of sugar often have high amounts of added salt. Try to select those with less than 200 milligrams of sodium per serving.
5. Check fat content. Cereal should contain less than 2 grams of fat per serving.

6. Avoid cereals with 100 percent of the Daily Value (DV) for certain nutrients. You pay extra for these nutrients and may be over-supplementing. This could be a problem, especially for children. DVs are based on the needs of an adult male (except iron, which is based on the needs of an adult female).
7. Buy a variety of cereals so that nutrients, sugar, and salt balance out. If one is a little high in sugar one day, eat one low in sugar the next.
8. Avoid cereals with toys or gimmicks. Many times you can buy a more nutritious cereal for less money. Use the money saved to let your child select a reward for helping you find a nutritious cereal.

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