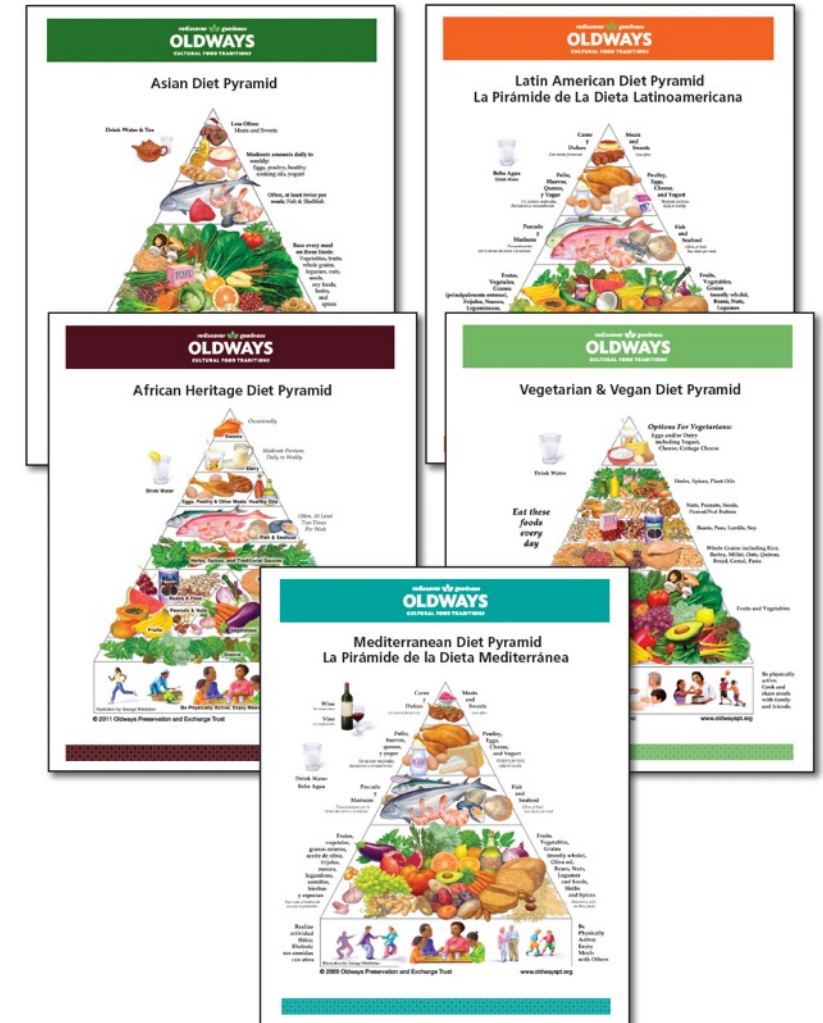


# Recommending the Adoption of WG-Rich Standards for Breakfast Cereals Redeemed through WIC

September 25, 2022

# About Oldways

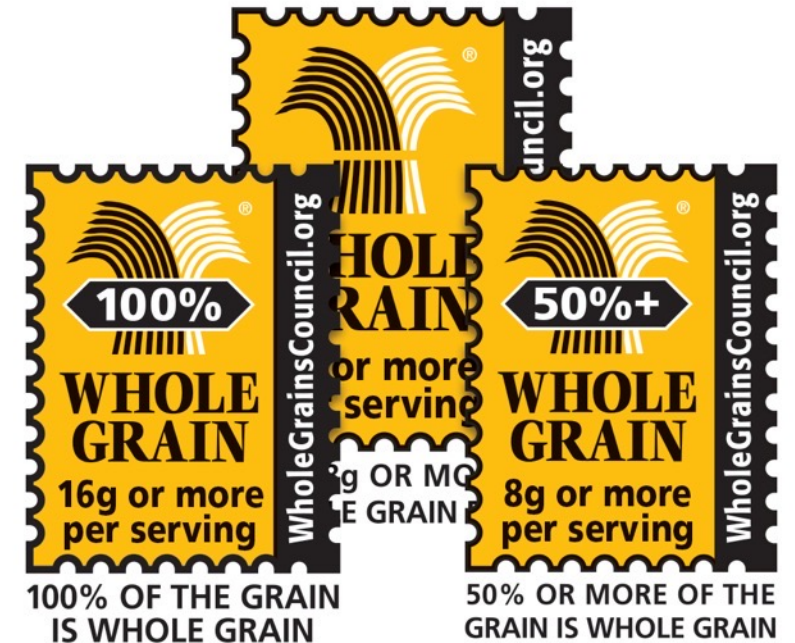
- **Our Vision**  
A healthier, happier life through cultural food traditions.
- **Our Mission**  
We inspire people to embrace the healthy, sustainable joys of the old ways of eating.
- **Best Known for**  
Creating the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid and other Heritage Diet Pyramids, Creating the Whole Grain Stamp, Culinary Travel



# About the Oldways Whole Grains Council

## Our three-part mission:

- To help consumers find whole grain foods and understand their health benefits
- To help manufacturers and restaurants create delicious whole grain foods
- To help the media write accurate and compelling stories about whole grains



# Importance of Consistency with Dietary Guidelines Recommendations

- WIC should be consistent with DGA's recommendation to "make half your grains whole grains"
- The Whole Grain-Rich standard employed in other federal nutrition programs ensures that at least half the grains in each qualifying product are whole grain, thus meeting the recommendation
- *Every* cereal product redeemed through WIC should contribute to increasing whole grain intake for participants
- The current system, where half the cereal options are whole grain, leaves room for actual purchases to deviate from the goal, therefore diluting the potential benefits of the program





# Huge Potential for Health Benefits

- HIGH whole grain intake is associated with:
  - Reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and death from all causes
  - Less cognitive decline
  - Lower cholesterol
  - Lower levels of inflammation
  - Maintenance of healthier body weight
- Conversely, LOW whole grain intake has been identified as the second greatest dietary risk factor for mortality after high sodium intake



GBD 2017 Risk Factor Collaborators. Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 84 behavioural, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks for 195 countries and territories, 1990-2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. The Lancet. 2018;**392**(10159):1923-94

# Shifting Preferences and Habits for the Long-Term

- Foods redeemable under WIC have the power to shape preferences and build healthy habits for the long-term.
- Studies show that it can take several repeated exposures to a food before children begin to accept it, and it may take even more exposures for adults.
- We can't help build healthy habits for the long-term if we're not giving people a chance to try these healthy foods in the first place.

## Number of Exposures to a New Food Before Acceptance

Infants: 1-5

Preschoolers: 5-10

School-aged: 10-15

Adults: 20+

\*Source: Dr. Keith Williams, Director of the Penn State Feeding Program and Professor of Pediatrics at Penn State College of Medicine



# Keeping WIC Options Culturally Relevant

- We recognize the importance of corn- and rice-based cereals for certain cultural demographics. Many of these cereals do not currently qualify as Whole Grain-Rich
- However, the Whole Grain-Rich standard makes room for whole grain versions of these kinds of products to be developed and introduced, whereas the current standards – based on whole grain health claims, which include high fiber requirements (referencing whole wheat's fiber content, rather than that of whole corn or brown rice)– do not



# Large Healthcare Cost Savings Potential

- The US spends about \$237B treating cardiovascular disease each year. Increasing consumption of whole grains from 0 servings per day to the recommended 3 servings per day is associated with a 13% reduction in CVD. Bringing Americans from their current average consumption level up to recommended levels could save almost \$22B a year, almost 10% of current costs
- Similarly, the US spends \$120B on coronary heart disease. Increasing whole grain intake to recommended levels could save \$14B, more than 11% of current costs
- Studies in Australia and Finland have shown similar cost savings associated with the reduction of diabetes and colorectal cancer through increased whole grain intake

Murphy MM, Schmier JK. Cardiovascular Healthcare Cost Savings Associated with Increased Whole Grains Consumption among Adults in the United States. *Nutrients*. 2020 Aug 3;12(8):2323. doi: 10.3390/nu12082323. PMID: 32756452; PMCID: PMC7469007.





# Further Aligning WIC with DGAs: Seafood

- Seafood was identified as a food group of “high priority” for pregnant, lactating, and postpartum mothers and young children.
- Canned fish is available in some (but not all) WIC food packages.
- We support authorizing fresh and frozen seafood, in addition to canned
  - NASEM encourages state agencies to authorize as many food options as feasible to promote acceptability and redemption
  - We can’t help build healthy habits for the long-term if we’re not giving people a chance to try these healthy foods in the first place.

# Conclusion

- The overwhelming majority of Americans do not meet whole grain recommendations
- There are significant health benefits associated with increasing whole grain intake
- There are also large potential healthcare cost savings to be gained
- It's time to implement the recommendations put forth by DGA and NASEM in order to increase whole grain and seafood intake for WIC participants and improve health for future generations
- Authorizing fresh and frozen seafood, in addition to canned, can further align WIC with the DGAs and improve health



# Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions

## **Kelly LeBlanc**

Director of Nutrition

Oldways

[kelly@oldwayspt.org](mailto:kelly@oldwayspt.org)

## **Caroline Sluyter**

Program Director

Oldways Whole Grains Council

[caroline@oldwayspt.org](mailto:caroline@oldwayspt.org)

