

## January is National Oatmeal Month!

Oatmeal is a whole grain that can be a delicious, warm way to add whole grains to your mealtimes during the cold winter season. Oats are full of important nutrients like vitamins B and E, calcium, magnesium, and zinc. This grain contains beta-glucan, a special kind of fiber, found to be especially effective in lowering cholesterol and insoluble dietary fiber, which has anticancer properties. Best of all, oats, like most other whole grains, can help us maintain a healthy weight.

There are several types of oatmeal such as rolled oats, quick cooking oats, instant oats, oat flour, and steel-cut oats. All these types have similar nutritional values, but many times instant oatmeal has other ingredients added such as sugar. The only way to know if there are 'extra' ingredients is to read the ingredient label of the product.

### Ideas to boost nutrition and flavor include:

- Make oatmeal with calcium-rich milk instead of water.
- Toss in raisins or dried cranberries and chopped nuts like walnuts or pecans.
- Add fresh or frozen berries or other fruits like apples or bananas.
- Mix in ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce.
- Sprinkle with cinnamon for sweetness, it adds flavor without calories. With a dusting of cinnamon, a smaller amount sweetener, or perhaps none at all, may be needed.

If eating a bowl of oatmeal isn't something you even want to consider, try using rolled oats in baked products like cookies, muffins or breads. Oatmeal can be used in place of bread crumbs in meat loaf or patties. Add the goal of eating more servings of whole grains with a regular exercise program for a healthier you.



Staying physically active year-round is important. During the winter months, the weather can present challenges when trying to be active. Here are some tips to help continue your family's active lifestyle, even when the weather is less than ideal.

The first step to being active is knowing how much physical activity is recommended each day. Adults need 2 ½ hours a week of physical activity and children ages 6-17 need 60 minutes a day.

- Make a plan and stick to it! Set specific times during the week when you can be active together.
- Be realistic with your goals. Most families are busy.
- Turn off the TV and other electronic devices. Your family should have no more than two hours per day of screen time.

