

# FACTSHEET



Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council

*Cultivating Good Health*

## BREAKFAST CEREAL CATEGORY: NUTRITIONAL PROFILE

### Breakfast Cereals and a Balanced Diet

Breakfast cereal is a popular way for Australians to start the day.<sup>1,2</sup> It's no wonder people choose breakfast cereals as they are an affordable, quick and nutritious part of a balanced diet.<sup>3-5</sup>

Eating breakfast cereal is linked to better wellbeing. Research shows people who regularly eat breakfast cereal are more likely to have a healthier diet, to weigh less, and are less likely to develop cardiovascular disease or type 2 diabetes.<sup>5</sup>

Breakfast cereals are also an important part of a nutrient rich diet. They provide 18% iron, 19% thiamin, 13% folate, 13% riboflavin and 11% of the dietary fibre intakes across the Australian population. In addition, they contribute very little towards kilojoules (energy 5%), total sugars (3%), sodium (2%) and fat (2%) intakes.<sup>1</sup>

### Breakfast Cereals on Shelf

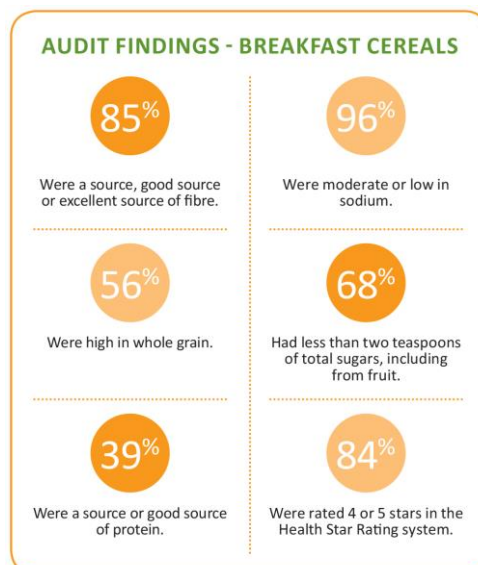
To understand the nutrient profile of grain and legume foods available in Australia the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council (GLNC) runs a regular systematic audit of products on shelf. The data demonstrates there is a large variety of nutritious breakfast cereals available to choose from.

In August 2016, GLNC examined the nutritional profile of 468 breakfast cereals found in four different retail supermarkets in the North Sydney area.<sup>6</sup> The review used on-pack information including nutrition information, claims and ingredients to determine the amount of fibre, protein, saturated fat, sodium, sugars and whole grains per serve and per 100g.

The comprehensive analysis included:

- 171 ready-to-eat cereals e.g. flaked cereals, bran cereals and wheat biscuits
- 206 muesli products (including granola and oat based cluster products)
- 91 hot cereals such as oats

The results were classified according to Food Standards Australia New Zealand Standard 1.2.7 Nutrition, Health and Related Claims criteria<sup>7</sup> (unless otherwise stated).



## Health Star Ratings

- 55% of breakfast cereals carried the Health Star Rating (HSR) on pack.
- The majority (84%) were rated 4-5 stars and almost all (95%) were rated at least 3 stars.
- Only 5.5% of products rated 2-2.5 stars and no products carried less than 2 stars.

TYPE	% WITH HSR ON PACK (number)	2.5 STARS OR LESS (%)*	3 OR MORE STARS (%)*	4 OR MORE STARS (%)*
Ready-to-eat cereals	66.7 (114)	11.4	88.6	71.9
Muesli, granola, clusters	43.7 (90)	1.1	98.9	91.1
Hot cereal	57.1 (52)	0.0	100.0	98.1
Total breakfast cereals	54.7 (256)	5.5	94.5	84.0

\*Of products carrying the Health Star Rating

## Whole Grains

- 64% of all breakfast cereals could be classified as either containing whole grains, high in whole grains or very high in whole grains according to the GLNC Code of Practice for Whole Grain Ingredient Content Claims.
- 56% of breakfast cereals provided at least a third of your daily whole grain (48g) in just one serve.

TYPE	MEAN g per serve	RANGE g per serve	MEAN g per 100g	RANGE g per 100g	CONTAINS ≥8g/ serve* (%)	HIGH ≥16g/ serve* (%)	VERY HIGH ≥24g/ serve* (%)
Ready-to-eat cereals	21.0	4.8-47	54.4	12-100	61.4	43.3	22.8
Muesli, granola clusters	26.7	3.6-45	56.9	8-90	52.4	50.0	37.4
Hot cereal	33.2	20-100**	86.4	50-100	93.4	93.4	86.8
Total breakfast cereals	26.5	3.6-100**	64.3	8-100	63.7	56.0	41.7

Note: Whole grain content was not available on pack for 25.4% of products (n = 119) so could not be included in this analysis. As a result, this may be an underestimate of the number of products that contain whole grain.  
 \* Based on GLNC Code of Practice for Whole Grain Ingredient Content Claims  
 \*\*100g whole grain per serve was an organic rolled oats product with 100g serve size. Next largest was 50g whole grain/serve.

## Dietary Fibre

- Most mueslis (92%) and hot cereals (91%), as well as almost three quarters (73%) of ready-to-eat cereals RTEC were classified as a source, good source or excellent source of fibre.

TYPE	MEAN g per 100g	RANGE g per 100g	SOURCE ≥2g/serve (%)	GOOD SOURCE ≥4g/serve (%)	EXCELLENT SOURCE ≥7g/serve (%)
Ready-to-eat cereals	9.5	1.0-34.1	73.1	35.1	8.2
Muesli, granola, clusters	8.9	3.2-18.9	91.7	55.3	7.8
Hot cereal	10	3.4-18.3	91.2	36.3	2.2
Total breakfast cereals	9.3	1.0-34.1	84.8	44.2	6.8

Note: Fibre information was not declared on the nutrition information panel of 5.6% of products audited (n = 26).

## Protein

- One in two (54%) muesli products provided a source of protein, as well as 35% of hot cereals and 22% of ready-to-eat cereals.

TYPE	MEAN g per 100g	RANGE g per 100g	SOURCE ≥5g/serve (%)	GOOD SOURCE ≥10g/serve (%)
Ready-to-eat cereals	10.0	4.6-22.7	21.6	1.2
Muesli, granola, clusters	10.9	3.5-20.6	54.4	3.9
Hot cereal	11.5	6.7-17	35.2	1.1
Total breakfast cereals	10.7	3.5-22.7	38.7	2.4

## Sodium

- The majority (96%) of breakfast cereals contained ≤400mg/100g sodium – the benchmark used by the Australian Government in setting reformulation targets as part of the Food and Health Dialogue.<sup>8</sup>
- Almost two thirds (65%) of breakfast cereals were low in sodium.
- Most RTEC (89.5%) contained ≤400mg/100g sodium and 25% were low in sodium.
- On average, a 40g serve of ready-to-eat cereals contained 98mg sodium (246mg/100g serve).

TYPE	MEAN mg per 100g	RANGE mg per 100g	LOW IN SODIUM ≤120mg/100g** (%)	BENCHMARK ≤400mg/100g (%)
Ready-to-eat cereals	246.2	5-590	25.1	89.5
Muesli, granola, clusters	62.0*	4-655*	83.5	99.5
Hot cereal	12.0	0-106	100.0	100.0
Total breakfast cereals	119.4*	0-655*	65.4	95.9

\*These values are inflated by a granola product with 655mg/100g sodium that was reported to have limited availability in retailers after the analysis was complete. If this product was excluded the results would be:

For muesli, granola, clusters – mean: 59.0; range: 4-360; low in sodium: 83.9% and sodium benchmark: 100%

For total breakfast cereals – mean: 118.0; range: 0-590; low in sodium: 65.5% and sodium benchmark: 96.1%

## Total Sugars

If you are concerned about sugars in your diet there are a variety of breakfast cereals available.

- Half of all breakfast cereals (55%) and most muesli products (83%) contained fruit pieces, which is a significant contributor to total sugars.
- The majority of breakfast cereals (68%), including 59% of ready-to-eat cereals, contained 20g or less of total sugars per 100g, which equates to less than 2 teaspoons per 40g serve.
- On average a 40g serve of ready-to-eat cereals contained 7g of total sugars (18g/100g) which is similar to the amount of total sugars found in half a medium sized apple<sup>9</sup>.

TYPE	WITH FRUIT PIECES % (number)	MEAN g per 100g	RANGE g per 100g	LOW IN SUGAR ≤5g/100g* (%)	NHSC* ≤20g/100g (%)
Ready-to-eat cereals	36.3 (62)	17.7	0.4-42	12.3	59.1
Muesli, granola, clusters	83.0 (171)	16.8	1.2-33.8	2.9	72.8
Hot cereal	28.6 (26)	9.4	0-27	54.9	73.6
Total breakfast cereals	55.3 (259)	15.7	0-42	16.5	67.9

\*National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines

NOTE: Total sugars includes sugars naturally occurring in ingredients such as fruit, plus added sugars such as honey

## TIPS FOR CHOOSING BREAKFAST CEREALS

Breakfast cereal is a nutritious, affordable way to start the day and there's a wide variety of breakfast cereals available to suit different tastes and occasions.

For a healthy everyday choice enjoy a breakfast cereal that:

1. Is higher in fibre or high in whole grain (look for the whole grain claim on pack)
2. Has a higher Health Star Rating
3. You can eat with milk or yoghurt to add a serve of dairy to your day

Visit [www.glnc.org.au](http://www.glnc.org.au) to download recipes, fact sheets and subscribe to GLNC's e-newsletter to learn more about the benefits of grains and legumes. | For all references cited go to [www.glnc.org.au/resources/fact-sheet-references](http://www.glnc.org.au/resources/fact-sheet-references).

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