

NEW RESEARCH: HEALTH STAR RATING DOES LITTLE TO HIGHLIGHT WHOLE GRAIN FOODS

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A study just published in the international journal [Nutrients](#) has found the Australian Health Star Rating (HSR) does not currently differentiate between whole grain and refined grain foods. This results in little, if any, difference in score between foods like brown and white rice, making it difficult for consumers to choose the best foods for health.

The research compared the HSR scores (between 0.5-5 stars) of 441 grain foods and found an average difference of less than half a star between whole grain versus refined grain bread (0.4 stars), rice (0.3), and flour (0.4), and less than one star difference (0.7) in breakfast cereals.

Though more whole grain foods scored between 4-5 stars than refined grain foods, the research identified significant overlap in foods scoring between 3.5-5 stars, which does little to promote whole grain foods as a healthier choice.

The HSR, currently undergoing a 5-year review, uses an algorithm to assign scores, but does not consider whole grain within foods, instead relying on dietary fibre. Though this may boost some whole grain food's scores, Felicity Curtain, an Accredited Practising Dietitian and Nutrition Manager of the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council says it isn't enough.

"There are big differences in the amount of dietary fibre present in grain foods, between 3-18%, so it doesn't make sense to rely solely on fibre as a surrogate measure for whole grain. Additionally, whole grains contain much more than just fibre - when all three natural layers of a grain are present, whole grains are rich in protein, B group vitamins, minerals and antioxidants too."

Australian Dietary Guidelines have promoted whole grains over refined grains since 1979, as they are protective against cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, colorectal cancer and weight gain. Globally, among dietary risk factors, low intake of whole grain foods has been noted as the second leading risk for mortality (behind sodium), making them a vitally important food in Australian diets.

Despite the benefits, most Australians still choose refined grain foods over whole grain, with most of our grain choices coming from foods like white bread, rice, and pasta and half of us not knowing what a whole grain is.

Now, as part of the HSR five-year review, whole grain is under consideration as an addition to the calculation. This would see whole grain foods scored higher than their refined alternatives, allowing Australians to identify whole grain foods more easily.

Ms Curtain says this provides a great opportunity for the HSR to lead the way internationally, with Singapore the only other country directly recognising whole grain through their Healthier Choice symbol.

- ENDS -

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Read the full paper [here](#).

To arrange an interview with a GLNC dietitian or to request images, please contact:

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Visit the [GLNC Website](#) for more recipes, factsheets and information on the nutrition and health benefits of whole grains.

