



## **Long-term Studies Tout Whole Grain Benefits**

Another recently published study shows that people who eat more whole grains tend to live longer and are less likely to die of heart disease.

Findings from the study titled “Association Between Dietary Whole Grain Intake and Risk of Mortality” were published in the January 5, 2015 online issue of *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

The findings were a compilation of two long-term observational studies – the Nurses’ Health Study from 1984 to 2010 and the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study from 1986 to 2010. The Nurses’ study focused on women and the Professionals study focused on men. For both studies, participants filled out periodic dietary questionnaires. Health records for participants in both groups were also updated periodically. More than 188,000 men and women participated in the studies.

According to the study findings, participants who reported consuming more whole grains were likely to be more physically active than other participants, tended to drink less alcohol, were less likely to smoke, and ate healthier diets in general.

Of the more than 188,000 total participants who began the study with no evidence of heart disease or cancer, nearly 27,000 had died by the end of the study period in 2010.

The study authors noted that participants who ate the most whole grains were nearly 10 percent less likely to die during the course of the studies than those who ate the least amount of whole grains. This was true even when the authors accounted for age, body mass index, dietary habits, physical activity and smoking.

The study findings indicated that with every additional 28 grams (one ounce) of whole grains eaten per day, the risk of heart disease was reduced by nine percent and the risk of death was reduced by five percent.

Other nutrition research professionals note, however, that it is difficult for observational studies to pinpoint whole grains' direct influence on mortality. Further, they say that most studies to date have not been able to single out an independent effect of whole grains.

That said, authors of the two long-term studies note that, unlike refined grains, whole grains do not lead to rapid changes in blood sugar and insulin levels. Further, whole grains contain beneficial nutrients such as vitamins, magnesium and lignans. This, they say may explain why whole grains are associated with lower diabetes and cardiovascular disease risk.