

# ConfusaClusters

A “yogurt-coated,” “high-fiber” romp through the cereal aisle

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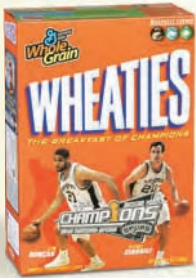
If health sells anywhere in the supermarket, it's in the cereal aisle.

You don't pick a cereal as much as you do a health problem (“Can help lower cholesterol,” “May reduce the risk of stroke,” “Lose 10 pounds the heart healthy way,” “Optimized glycemic response”) or a diet strategy (South Beach, Weight Watchers, Special K, GoLean).

Or, you go by which ingredients are missing (“low carb,” “75% less sugar,” “no trans fats”) or which are present (“rich in antioxidants,” “Fiber One,” “Protein Plus,” “whole grain”).

Either way, the competition for your eyeballs, your health concerns, and your pocketbook is fierce. Here's how to ignore the latest fads (like fake yogurt coating or a dusting of whole grains) and focus on the ingredients that count.

We gave whole-grain (or mostly whole-grain) cereals two possible paths to a Best Bite and one way to become a Super-High-Fiber Best Bite:



## 1. Low-Sugar.

Cereals like the *original* Cheerios, Wheaties, and Total are Best Bites and are hard to criticize. After all, a bowl of Wheaties or Total is basically whole wheat

with a little sugar and some vitamins. And all three brands easily stay under our limit of eight grams of sugar per one- or two-ounce serving.

But at three grams of fiber per serving, none of them give your breakfast a strong push toward the latest daily fiber targets from the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine:

- 21 grams for women 51 or older
- 25 grams for women 50 or younger
- 30 grams for men 51 or older
- 38 grams for men 50 or younger

The average American gets only about half those levels, which are designed to reduce the risk of heart disease. Fiber may

also help prevent diabetes, constipation, diverticulitis, and obesity.

## 2. High-Fiber.

Shredded wheat, with six grams of fiber and zero sugar per serving, clearly deserves a Best Bite. But so do other whole-grain (or mostly whole-grain) cereals that are high in fiber (at least five grams per serving), regardless of how much sugar they have. We lifted the sugar limit because of:



■ **Fruit.** We didn't want to penalize high-fiber cereals—mostly raisin brans—that get sugar from fruit as well as corn syrup and other added sweeteners. Unfortunately, Nutrition Facts panels

don't distinguish between added sugar and sugar from fruit.

■ **Weighty servings.** Many high-fiber cereals are heavy (often thanks to their fruit or bran), so their serving size is typically two ounces, versus one ounce for lighter cereals like Wheaties or Cheerios. Even so, few of our high-fiber Best Bites

had more than 16 grams of sugar. That's no worse than the 8-gram sugar limit for cereals with less fiber. Exception: added sugar plus sugar from the fruit in raisin brans brings their total to around 20 grams.

## 3. Super-High-Fiber.

More than a dozen popular, mostly whole-grain cereals have at least 8 grams of fiber, enough to send you galloping toward your daily fiber goal. Those are the Super-High-Fiber Best Bites in our chart.

And your options now go beyond the tiny pellets in All-Bran to the flakes, clusters, and more in cereals like General Mills Fiber One Honey Clusters, Weetabix Organic Crispy Flakes & Fiber, and Kashi Good Friends.

Just remember that fiber isn't everything. As the cereals on pages 11 and 12 show, a handful of claims, ingredients, and tricks can trip you up.



The information for this article was compiled by Danielle Weinberg.

## Yogurt Nonsense



“Whole Grain Flakes with a Naturally-Flavored Yogurt Coating!” exclaims the Vanilla Yogurt Total box.

Cereal dipped in yogurt? Only if you define yogurt as a mixture of sugar, palm kernel oil, dextrose (a form of sugar), dried nonfat yogurt, and natural flavor. The cereal is an “excellent source of calcium” not because of yogurt, but because of added calcium carbonate.

Fruit & Yogurt Special K, Yogurt Burst Cheerios, All-Bran Yogurt Bites, and Vanilla Yogurt Crunch Life are also short on yogurt. (Yogurt powder is typically heat-treated, which kills any beneficial bacteria.) Of course, phantom ingredients are nothing new in the cereal aisle. Special K’s “berry oat clusters,” for example, are made of dyed and flavored apple pieces, not berries.

Note to Total eaters: like many NEW! versions of old cereals, Vanilla Yogurt Total has too much sugar to get a Best Bite. And if you eat a daily bowl of any kind of Total (“100% Daily Value of 12 VITAMINS & MINERALS”) *instead* of taking a multivitamin, you could end up with too little vitamin D, copper, selenium, or chromium.

## No Magic



“Lose 10 lbs. The Heart Healthy Way!” say the boxes of Grape-Nuts, Raisin Bran, Shredded Wheat, and the other cereals in Post’s Healthy Classics line. “Research by a leading cardiologist shows that people who ate 2 servings of Post Healthy Classics cereals each day,

as part of a reduced calorie diet, LOST 10 LBS and reduced their risk factors for heart disease...”

According to Post, half of the people in the study lost at least 10 pounds in 12 weeks by (1) replacing two meals a day with two bowls of Post Healthy Classics cereal, (2) cutting an average of 600 calories a day out of their diet, and (3) exercising for up to 45 minutes a day, five days a week. Well, duh.

While the company wouldn’t say, we assume that the study didn’t compare the cereal eaters to a control group—dieters told to exercise and cut calories but not to substitute Healthy Classics for other foods. So it’s not clear how much (if any) credit the cereals deserve.

Bottom line: *any* healthy whole-grain cereal (shredded wheat, for example) could help you feel full while you cut calories, but none are magic bullets.

## No Special Diet Cereals

Special K used to be *the* diet cereal (thanks to Kellogg’s marketing department, not the contents of the box). Now others want a piece of the action.

The most disappointing: overly sweet Weight Watchers cereals (the fake cinnamon and vanilla varieties taste more like toothpaste than cereal). Their 90 to 170 calories per serving—depending on whether they’re sweetened with the safe artificial sweetener Splenda (sucralose) or evaporated cane juice—are no less than most similar cereals.

What’s more, much of the fiber in Weight Watchers comes not from whole grains, but from inulin, a carbohydrate that’s typically isolated from chicory root. Inulin is considered fiber because it’s poorly digested. But like all isolated fibers, it may not reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, or constipation as well as the intact fiber in whole grains.

In short, dieters (and anyone else) could do better with almost any of our Best Bites. If you have a sweet tooth, try South Beach Diet Whole Grain Crunch or Fiber One Honey Clusters. Both are sweetened with Splenda but don’t have the cloying, sweet aftertaste of Weight Watchers.

Caution: you can cut calories to 50 or 60 per serving by switching to a cereal like regular Fiber One or All-Bran Extra Fiber, which are sweetened with aspartame. But it’s not worth it. The artificial sweetener, which has had a troubled history, increased the risk of cancer in a study in rats last year.



# Honey, I Shrank the Oats



Honey Bunches of Oats is one of the five top-selling brand-name cereals (along with Cheerios, Honey Nut Cheerios, Frosted Flakes, and Frosted Mini-Wheats).

The “Good Source of Whole Grain” on the package probably doesn’t hurt sales. Yet the cereal industry has decided that to qualify for that claim, a cereal needs just eight grams of whole grain per serving. (Don’t confuse that with

eight grams of *fiber*. Eight grams of whole wheat, for example, contains less than one gram of fiber.) The Food and Drug Administration has asked cereal manufacturers to stop making “good source” claims, but companies needn’t comply.

Honey Bunches’ claim means that it could be as little as 25 percent whole grain. Its first ingredient is (refined) corn, and each ¾-cup serving has just 2 grams of fiber.

A word to the wise: Ignore “good” or “excellent source of whole grain” claims. Instead, make sure that at least the first grain in the ingredient list is whole.

# Weetabigger



“Delicious whole grain cereal,” says the box of Weetabix Organic Crispy Flakes & Fiber. Got that right.

The makers of Weetabix biscuits—the best-selling cereal in Great Britain—have crossed the ocean to offer us two delicious Best Bite flake cereals. But at first glance it’s not clear how a serving of Crispy Flakes & Fiber gets 11 grams of fiber, when a serving of its sister, Crispy Flakes, has 4 grams.

Flakes & Fiber has extra wheat bran and oat bran (plus some added oat hull fiber, an isolated fiber that may or may not have all the benefits of intact whole-grain fiber). But you can chalk up most of the difference to Crispy Flakes & Fiber’s bigger serving—2 ounces (1¼ cups), versus 1 ounce (¾ cup) for Crispy Flakes.

Whenever you compare two cereals, make sure to check the serving sizes. The fiber, sugar, or calories may be twice as high simply because you’re getting twice as much cereal.

# Cereal Numbers

The first grain in the ingredient list of our Best Bites (✓✓) is bran or a whole grain like oats or whole wheat, and it has to come before sugar. Best Bites also have at least 3 grams of fiber and no more than 8 grams of sugar per serving. If they have 5 grams of fiber or more, there’s no sugar limit. And if they have at least 8 grams of fiber, they’re Super-High-Fiber Best Bites (★★).

In addition, all Best Bites have less than 1½ grams of saturated fat per serving and are free of the artificial sweetener aspartame. If the first grain in a cereal’s ingredient list is *not* a whole grain, the name is marked with a diamond (◆). Cereals are ranked from most to least fiber, then least to most sugar and calories.

## Cereal (serving size, weight in grams of 1 serving)

	Calories	Fiber (grams)	Sugar (grams)
<b>8 grams of fiber or more</b>			
General Mills Fiber One (½ c, 30 g) <sup>#</sup>	60	14	0
★★ General Mills Fiber One, Honey Clusters (1¼ c, 55 g)	170	14	5
Kellogg’s All-Bran, Extra Fiber (½ c, 26 g) <sup>#</sup>	50	13	0
★★ Kellogg’s All-Bran, Bran Buds (½ c, 30 g)	70	13	8
★★ Kashi Good Friends (1 c, 53 g)	170	12	9
★★ Weetabix Organic Crispy Flakes & Fiber (1¼ c, 55 g)	170	11	10
★★ Kellogg’s All-Bran, Original (½ c, 31 g)	80	10	6
★★ Kashi GoLean (1 c, 52 g)	140	10	6
★★ Kellogg’s All-Bran, Yogurt Bites (1¼ c, 56 g)	190	10	7
◆ Weight Watchers Banana Almond Medley (¾ c, 50 g)	170	10	11
★★ Weight Watchers Flakes ‘n Fiber with Oats (½ c, 30 g)	90	9	1
★★ Post 100% Bran (½ c, 29 g)	80	9	7
★★ Post Spoon Size Shredded Wheat ‘n Bran, (1¼ c, 59 g)	200	8	1
★★ South Beach Diet Toasted Wheats (1¼ c, 59 g)	210	8	3
★★ Kashi Good Friends, Cinna-Raisin Crunch (1 c, 50 g)	170	8	13
★★ Kashi GoLean Crunch (1 c, 53 g)	190	8	13
★★ Post Raisin Bran (1 c, 59 g)	190	8	19
<b>5 to 7 grams of fiber</b>			
✓✓ Kashi 7 Whole Grain Nuggets (½ c, 58 g)	210	7	3
◆ Weight Watchers Cinnamon Cluster Crunch (¾ c, 45 g)	150	7	8
✓✓ General Mills Raisin Bran (1½ c, 55 g)	170	7	11
◆ General Mills Multi-Bran Chex (1 c, 55 g)	190	7	12
✓✓ Kellogg’s Raisin Bran (1 c, 59 g)	190	7	19
✓✓ Malt-O-Meal Raisin Bran (1 c, 59 g)	220	7	21
✓✓ Post Shredded Wheat (2 biscuits, 47 g)	160	6	0
✓✓ Post Spoon Size Shredded Wheat (1 c, 49 g)	170	6	0
✓✓ Weetabix Organic (3 biscuits, 53 g)	180	6	3
✓✓ Kashi 7 Whole Grain Flakes (1 c, 50 g)	180	6	5
✓✓ Post Grape-Nuts (½ c, 58 g)	200	6	5
✓✓ Kashi Organic Promise, Autumn Wheat (1 c, 54 g)	190	6	7
✓✓ Malt-O-Meal Mini Spooners (1 c, 55 g) <sup>1</sup>	190	6	11
Kellogg’s Cracklin’ Oat Bran (¾ c, 49 g) <sup>*</sup>	200	6	15

	Calories	Fiber (grams)	Sugar (grams)
✓✓ Post Fruit & Bran (1 c, 55 g) <sup>1</sup>	200	6	15
✓✓ Weight Watchers Vanilla Puffed Wheat (1 c, 30 g)	100	5	0
✓✓ Kellogg's Special K, Protein Plus (¾ c, 29 g)	100	5	2
✓✓ Kellogg's Complete Wheat Bran Flakes (¾ c, 29 g)	90	5	5
✓✓ Post Bran Flakes (¾ c, 30 g)	100	5	5
✓✓ Kashi Heart to Heart (¾ c, 33 g)	110	5	5
✓✓ General Mills Wheat Chex (1 c, 50 g)	180	5	5
◆ Quaker Crunchy Corn Bran (¾ c, 27 g)	90	5	6
✓✓ Kashi Organic Promise, Cinnamon Harvest (1 c, 54 g)	190	5	9
✓✓ Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats, Big Bite (5 biscuits, 51 g)	180	5	10
✓✓ Post Grape-Nuts Trail Mix Crunch (½ c, 48 g)	180	5	10
✓✓ Post Spoon Size Frosted Shredded Wheat (1 c, 52 g)	180	5	12
✓✓ Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats, except Big Bite (24 biscuits, 54 g) <sup>1</sup>	190	5	12
✓✓ Quaker Oatmeal Squares (1 c, 58 g) <sup>1</sup>	220	5	12
✓✓ General Mills Raisin Nut Bran (1¼ c, 55 g)	200	5	15
✓✓ Mother's Cinnamon Oat Crunch (1 c, 60 g)	230	5	15
✓✓ General Mills Oatmeal Crisp, Triple Berry (1 c, 55 g)	210	5	16
✓✓ Kellogg's Smart Start, Healthy Heart (1¼ c, 60 g) <sup>1</sup>	230	5	17
✓✓ General Mills Total, Raisin Bran (1 c, 55 g)	170	5	19

**3 to 4 grams of fiber**

✓✓ South Beach Diet Whole Grain Crunch (¾ c, 30 g)	110	4	4
✓✓ Weetabix Organic Crispy Flakes (¾ c, 30 g)	110	4	4
✓✓ Kellogg's Complete Oat Bran Flakes (¾ c, 30 g)	110	4	6
✓✓ Alpen, No Added Sugar (⅔ c, 55 g)	200	4	7
✓✓ Familia Swiss Müesli, No Added Sugar (½ c, 57 g)	210	4	7
✓✓ Familia Low Fat Müesli (⅔ c, 55 g)	190	4	8
Post Selects Great Grains, Crunchy Pecans (½ c, 52 g)	220	4	9
◆ Weight Watchers Honey Almond Crisp (¾ c, 40 g) <sup>1</sup>	150	4	10
Alpen, Original (⅔ c, 55 g)	200	4	11
Post Spoon Size Shredded Wheat, Honey Nut (1 c, 52 g)	200	4	12
Quaker Life, Vanilla Yogurt Crunch (1¼ c, 55 g)	210	4	12
Post Selects, Banana Nut Crunch (1 c, 59 g)	240	4	12
General Mills Total, with Strawberries (1 c, 52 g)	180	4	13
Kashi Heart to Heart Oat Flakes & Wild Blueberries (1¼ c, 55 g)	200	4	13
◆ Kellogg's Smart Start, Soy Protein (1 c, 55 g)	200	4	14
Post Selects Great Grains, Raisins, Dates, & Pecans (½ c, 54 g)	210	4	14
Familia Swiss Müesli, Original Recipe (½ c, 60 g)	220	4	14
General Mills Oatmeal Crisp, Almond (1 c, 55 g)	220	4	16
Kellogg's Crunchy Blends, Müeslix (⅔ c, 55 g)	200	4	17
General Mills Total, Vanilla Yogurt (1 c, 55 g)*	190	4	18
General Mills Oatmeal Crisp, Apple Cinnamon (1 c, 55 g)	210	4	19
Kellogg's Raisin Bran Crunch (1 c, 53 g)	190	4	20
✓✓ General Mills Cheerios (1 c, 30 g)	110	3	1
✓✓ General Mills Wheaties (1 c, 30 g)	110	3	4
✓✓ Post Grape-Nuts Flakes (¾ c, 29 g)	110	3	4
✓✓ General Mills Total (¾ c, 30 g)	100	3	5
✓✓ Mother's Toasted Oat Bran (¾ c, 32 g)	120	3	5
✓✓ General Mills Cheerios, Multi Grain (1 c, 30 g)	110	3	6

	Calories	Fiber (grams)	Sugar (grams)
Quaker Toasted Oatmeal (1 c, 49 g) <sup>1</sup>	190	3	12
General Mills Total, Honey Clusters (¾ c, 48 g)	170	3	13
Kellogg's Crunchy Blends, Just Right (¾ c, 53 g)	200	3	13
Post Selects, Maple Pecan Crunch (¾ c, 52 g)*	220	3	13
◆ Kellogg's Smart Start, Antioxidants (1 c, 50 g)	190	3	14
◆ General Mills Basic 4 (1 c, 55 g)	200	3	14
Quaker 100% Natural Granola (½ c, 50 g) <sup>1*</sup>	210	3	14
Post Selects, Cranberry Almond Crunch (1 c, 57 g)	220	3	15
◆ Post Selects, Blueberry Morning (1¼ c, 60 g)	230	3	15
Kellogg's Crunchy Blends, Low Fat Granola (½ c, 55 g) <sup>1</sup>	210	3	16
General Mills Honey Nut Clusters (1 c, 55 g)	210	3	17
General Mills Oatmeal Crisp, Raisin (1 c, 55 g)	210	3	18
Quaker 100% Natural Granola, Low Fat (⅔ c, 55 g)*	210	3	18

**Less than 3 grams of fiber**

Kashi 7 Whole Grain Honey Puffs (1 c, 30 g)	120	2	6
◆ Post Honey Bunches of Oats (¾ c, 31 g) <sup>1</sup>	120	2	7
Quaker Life, except Vanilla Yogurt Crunch (¾ c, 32 g) <sup>1</sup>	120	2	7
General Mills Cheerios, Honey Nut or Team (1 c, 29 g) <sup>2</sup>	110	2	10
General Mills Cheerios, Berry Burst (1 c, 30 g) <sup>1</sup>	110	2	11
General Mills Cheerios, Yogurt Burst (¾ c, 30 g) <sup>1</sup>	120	2	11
◆ Post Grape-Nuts O's (1 c, 32 g)	120	2	11
◆ Kellogg's Crunch, Cran-Vanilla or Toasted Honey (1¼ c, 57 g) <sup>2</sup>	210	2	19
◆ Puffed wheat, any brand (1 c, 15 g)	60	1	0
Kashi 7 Whole Grain Puffs (1 c, 19 g)	70	1	0
◆ Kellogg's Corn Flakes (1 c, 28 g)	100	1	2
◆ General Mills Corn or Rice Chex (1 c, 30 g) <sup>2</sup>	120	1	3
◆ Kellogg's Crispix, Product 19, or Special K (1 c, 30 g) <sup>2</sup>	110	1	4
◆ Kellogg's Corn Flakes with Real Bananas (¾ c, 26 g)*	110	1	7
◆ Kellogg's Special K, Vanilla Almond (¾ c, 30 g)	110	1	9
◆ Kashi Organic Promise, Strawberry Fields (1 c, 32 g)	120	1	9
◆ Kellogg's Crispix, Cinnamon Crunch (¾ c, 30 g)	120	1	9
◆ Kellogg's Fruit Harvest, Banana Berry (¾ c, 30 g)*	120	1	9
◆ Kellogg's Fruit Harvest, except Banana Berry (¾ c, 30 g) <sup>1</sup>	110	1	10
◆ Kellogg's Special K, Red Berries (1 c, 31 g)	110	1	10
◆ Kellogg's Special K, Fruit & Yogurt (¾ c, 32 g)	120	1	11
◆ Quaker Honey Graham Oh's (¾ c, 27 g)*	110	1	12
◆ Kellogg's Frosted Flakes (¾ c, 31 g)	120	1	12
General Mills Cheerios, Apple Cinnamon (¾ c, 30 g)	120	1	13
General Mills Cheerios, Frosted (1 c, 30 g)	120	1	13
◆ Puffed rice, any brand (1 c, 15 g)	60	0	0
General Mills Frosted or Honey Nut Chex (¾ c, 30 g) <sup>2</sup>	120	0	10

★★ **Super-High-Fiber Best Bite.** ✓✓ **Best Bite.** ◆ First grain in the ingredient list is not whole grain. <sup>1</sup>Average of all varieties. <sup>2</sup>Average of the varieties listed. \*Contains the inadequately tested artificial sweetener aspartame. \*Contains at least 1½ grams of saturated fat.

**Daily Values** (for a 2,000-calorie diet): **Sugar:** 40 grams (10 teaspoons). **Fiber:** 25 grams. **Saturated Fat:** 20 grams.

Sources: manufacturers and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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