

NUTRITIOUS RICE

Nutritious? It sure is! This important carbohydrate is the staple food for more than two-thirds of the world's population. Rice is a good source of thiamin, niacin, phosphorous, iron, potassium and folic acid. And, rice is healthful for what it does not contain. Rice has no fat, no cholesterol and is sodium free. Rice is also non-allergenic.

Rice is a great source of complex carbohydrates, which is an important source of the fuel our bodies need. Health experts recommend the largest portion of our diet should come from complex carbohydrates such as rice, bread, cereal and pasta. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Guide Pyramid illustrates a well balanced diet, for the day: 2 to 3 servings from dairy, 2 to 3 servings from protein, 3 to 5 servings from vegetables, 2 to 4 servings from fruit and 6 to 11 servings from the rice, bread and cereal group. But if 6 to 11 servings sounds like a lot, it really isn't. One serving of rice is only 1/2 cup, and serving of bread is only one slice.

AN IMPORTANT COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATE

Carbohydrates fuel the body. There are two kinds of carbohydrates, simple carbohydrates (sugars like sucrose and fructose) and complex carbohydrates (starches). Rice is a great source of complex carbohydrates, the best source of fuel for the body. Complex carbohydrates consist of starches and dietary fiber. While simple carbohydrates digest quickly providing a fast, short burst of energy, complex carbohydrates digest more slowly and provide a more even, steady source of energy.

BROWN RICE VS. WHITE RICE

White rice is just as nutritious as brown rice. While brown rice does have slightly more fiber, Vitamin E, phosphorus and calcium than white rice, most of the white rice sold in the United States is enriched . This enrichment in white rice actually provides more iron and thiamin than brown rice. All rice, white and brown, is now enriched with folic acid.

RICE BRAN AND RICE BRAN OIL

Rice bran is the outer layer of brown rice. When brown rice is milled, two products emerge. One is white rice and the other is rice bran. Rice bran is a slightly sweet, nutty tasting product. It is high in fiber, vitamins and nutrients. Rice bran is used as an ingredient in baking mixes, cereals and vitamin concentrates, and, it can be added to recipes.

Rice bran also contains a high concentration of oil which is often extracted for a variety of uses. Rice bran oil is a high-quality cooking oil and can be used in the same way as other cooking oils. Rice bran oil is high in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat and low in saturated fat. Studies have shown rice bran oil to be effective in lowering cholesterol levels in the blood.

RICE IS NON-ALLERGENIC

Rice is easy to digest and it is non-allergenic. And, rice contains no gluten. These attributes are a plus for infants and the elderly, as well as, people with a sensitivity to gluten, the protein found in wheat. Celiac Sprue Disease is a digestive malabsorption problem. It is treated with the total omission of any product that contains the protein gluten. Gluten is found in foods made from wheat, barely, rye and oats and oftentimes millet and buckwheat. In addition to white and brown rice grains, rice also comes in many forms including flours and meal. There are also many special rice based bread and cereal products on the market.

HIGH PROTEIN, LOW CARBOHYDRATE DIETS

There has been a lot of low carbohydrate diets being popularized with the promises of fast and easy weight loss. Diets like “Sugar Busters!”, “Dr. Atkins New Diet Revolution”, “Dr. Stillman’s Quick Weight Loss Diet”, “Protein Power”, etc. promote that carbohydrates are bad. No food is bad. And no one food or group of foods has the “magic cure” for weight loss.

In fact, many health professionals, including the American Dietetics Association, condemn these high protein diets as a nutritional “nightmare”. Too much protein can lead to calcium loss from bones. Too much protein can also stress the kidneys. Other side-effects from these high protein diets includes bad breath, constipation, dehydration, fatigue and lightheadedness.

These diets may work in the short term for dropping a few pounds, but they don’t teach healthy eating habits. and they are hard to stick with. In due time, the dieter will grow tired of the fad diet and slip back into poor habits. In order to maintain a healthy weight and a healthful lifestyle, our bodies need exercise and a variety of nutrients that come from eating a variety of foods.

The “secret” to losing weight and maintaining a healthful diet remains the same. Cut back on the calories, increase physical activity and eat a diet that includes a variety of complex carbohydrates including rice, fruits and vegetables.

Nutritional Values of Rice

	Brown Rice		Regular White (Enriched)		Parboiled (Enriched)		Precooked (Enriched)	
	Uncooked	Cooked	Uncooked	Cooked	Uncooked	Cooked	Dry Form	Prepared
	100 g.	1/2 cup = 95 g.	100 g.	1/2 cup = 79 g.	100 g.	1/2 cup = 88 g.	100 g.	1/2 cup = 74 g.
Water (%)	10.4	70.2	11.6	54.1	10.2	63.8	8.1	56.6
Calories (kcal)	370	106	365	103	371	100	379	73
Protein (g.)	7.9	2.5	7.1	2.1	6.8	2	7.7	1.5
Fat (g.)	2.9	0.9	0.7	0.2	0.7	0.2	0.3	0.1
Carbohydrate (g.)	77.2	21.8	79.9	22.3	81.7	21.8	83.6	15.7
Dietary Fiber (g.)	3.5	1.6	1	0.03	1.8	0.4	1.6	0.6
Ash (g.)	1.5	0.44	0.6	0.3	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.5
Calcium (g.)	23	10	28	8	60	17	18	6
Phosphorus (mg.)	333	79	115	34	136	37	68	10
Iron (mg.)	1.5	0.4	**4.3	**0.9	**3.6	**0.9	**4.2	**0.5
Sodium (mg.)	7	***	5	***	5	***	6	***
Potassium (mg.)	223	41	115	28	120	33	18	3
Thiamine (mg.)	0.4	0.09	**0.6	**0.13	**0.6	**0.2	**0.6	**0.05
Riboflavin (mg.)	0.09	0.02	0.05		0.07		0.06	
Niacin (mg.)	5.1	1.5	**4.2	**1.2	**3.6	**1.2	**5.5	**4.1
Folate (mcg.)	20	3.8	**231	**45.8	**231	**44	**231	**30.3
Vitamin E (mg.)	0.68	0.2						

The information for this table was taken from the *Composition of Foods*, Agricultural Handbook No. 8-20, Agricultural Research Service, USDA (Revised 12/91).

Data for cooked rice was based on results of yield test study conducted by USA Rice Council, 1991.

** Values for iron, thiamine, niacin and folate are based on the minimum levels of enrichment specified by the U.S. Government.

*** Varies with sodium content of water and the addition of salt in cooking.