

No, wholemeal bread is not ideal (far from it!)

You probably know that "white bread" (the baguette) should be avoided as much as possible.

Or you should know: because it is too sweet (starchy), too salty, and very low in vitamins and minerals.

There is nothing like white bread to make you fat and damage your health slowly. All nutritionists agree on this.

The problem is that wholemeal bread is sometimes presented as the miracle alternative. It is the 'good guy' in a cartoon where white bread is the 'bad guy'.

Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but that's just **not true**.

Most breads are not healthy, whether they are white or wholemeal! There are exceptions - and I'll tell you which types of bread to choose.

But you need to understand why conventional wholemeal bread is problematic, despite its few advantages.

Okay, wholemeal bread contains fibre and vitamins

Wholemeal bread has a good reputation because it contains more good nutrients than white bread. In fact, compared to white bread, wholemeal bread will give you^[1] :

- 2.5 times more fibre ;
- 3 times more magnesium, 2.5 times more potassium and 2 times more iron;
- 3 times more vitamin B3 and 2 times more vitamin B6.

The problem is that these inputs are not very impressive.

Even if you eat five pieces of wholemeal bread (100g), you will not exceed a quarter of the recommended fibre intake. You will only cover 18% of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for

magnesium, 16% for potassium and 14% for iron. The rest is even more negligible.

A large handful of almonds (50g) will give you more magnesium and potassium, and as much fibre and iron as those 5 portions of wholemeal bread.

With the advantage that almonds have almost no health benefits. Bread, on the other hand, has many shortcomings:

White bread or wholemeal bread: faster sugars than Coca Cola!

White bread is usually singled out for being high in 'fast sugars'.

That's right: its glycaemic index is around 70, like table sugar (the glycaemic index measures the intensity with which a food raises your blood sugar level).

It is even higher than that of Coca Cola, which is "only" 63!

But what is almost always overlooked is that the glycemic index of wholemeal bread is just as high as that of white bread.

I know it's hard to believe.

So I suggest you look at the GI chart from the prestigious Harvard University.

^[2] You can also check out this scientific study from 2013 which showed that wholemeal flour produces just as high a blood sugar rise as white flour. ^[3]

Reducing your intake of high glycemic index (GI) foods is one of the most important things you can do for your health.

When your blood sugar level rises sharply, your pancreas is forced to intervene suddenly to bring it back to normal, via the production of insulin.

The problem is that the dose of insulin needed to "put out the fire" is so high that after two hours you run out of blood sugar, and you experience mild hypoglycaemia, feeling tired and needing to eat something sweet.

This is why fast sugars are the enemy of those who want to lose weight. Worse: in the long term, they accelerate the ageing of the body and can trigger type II diabetes. ^[4]

And this is not the only flaw in the bread:

As much gluten in wholemeal bread as in white bread

We tend to forget this, but wholemeal bread contains the same amount of gluten as white bread.

There is mounting evidence that a significant proportion of the population is *sensitive* to gluten^[5] , and has a vested interest in avoiding it.

I am not talking about people who are intolerant to gluten: they cannot ingest a gram of gluten without an immediate violent reaction from their body (this is called "celiac disease").

No, I mean 'healthy' people without celiac disease. Well, even in them, gluten can damage the lining of the intestine, causing pain, digestive problems and fatigue. ^[6]

A recent study has even shown that a gluten protein, gliadin, increases intestinal permeability in everyone, including those who are neither intolerant nor sensitive to gluten. ^[7] This can lead to an increased risk of intestinal and autoimmune diseases.

These two criteria - blood sugar and gluten - should be enough to convince you to limit your consumption of wholemeal bread.

But that's not all. What we NEVER tell you is that on 3 other criteria, wholemeal bread is even worse than white bread:

MORE pesticides in wholemeal bread than in white bread

First of all, your (non-organic) wholemeal bread contains more pesticides than the classic baguette.

The reason is simple. Wholemeal bread is made from a flour that incorporates all three elements of the wheat grain: the bran (the outer layer of the grain), the endosperm (the middle layer) and the germ (the inner layer). White flour contains only the middle layer.

The outer shell of the grain (bran) is by definition more exposed to pesticide spraying. The endosperm of white flour, on the other hand, is well protected, as it is housed inside the grain.

The result: the researchers found that the pesticides were concentrated in the bran of the wheat^[8], from which wholemeal bread is made.

Is it really necessary to specify that it is better to avoid pesticides? For the record, among their deleterious effects, there is an increased risk of inflammation, cardiovascular disease ^[9] and Parkinson's disease. ^[10]

And that's not all.

MORE phytic acid in wholemeal bread than in white bread

Wheat, like most cereals, contains a lot of phytic acid, concentrated in its outer shell (always the bran!). Phytic acid is harmful because it prevents your body from properly absorbing essential minerals such as zinc, calcium, iron or magnesium.

This is particularly serious in the case of zinc, as most Westerners are slightly deficient in zinc, due in part to the dramatic soil depletion of the past fifty years.

Zinc is vital: it is essential to the immune system (it helps prevent flu and colds in winter), and it helps keep your brain, eyes, hair and other essential functions healthy. Even a slight deficiency makes us more vulnerable to infections, reduces fertility, and fuels depression.

In the case of radical deficiency (fortunately rare), the consequences are even more serious.

In 1964, Iranian and Egyptian boys were found to have testicles insufficiently developed, due to an extreme lack of zinc. However, the local diet did not lack zinc. But the bread they ate in large quantities contained a lot of phytic acid and prevented them from absorbing this zinc! ^[12]

MORE acrylamide in wholemeal bread than in white bread

The final problem with wholemeal bread is its high level of acrylamide.

Acrylamide is THE topic that is alarming health authorities at the moment. As recently as June 2015, EFSA, the European Food Safety Authority, issued the following opinion:

"Based on animal studies, EFSA confirms the conclusions of previous assessments that acrylamide in food potentially increases the risk of developing cancer for consumers of all age groups.

Acrylamide is a substance massively present in chips, crisps and biscuits, which are in any case foods to be avoided.

But it is also found in supposedly 'healthy' foods like coffee and... bread! According to EFSA, bread is responsible for a quarter of the acrylamide exposure of an average European adult. ^[13]

And you should know that wholemeal bread contains almost twice as much acrylamide as white bread. ^[14]

Acrylamide is formed at high temperatures from various sugars and amino acids, including asparagine. However, asparagine is found much more in wholemeal flours than in white flours, as this substance is also mainly located in the outer shell of the wheat.

Why aren't you told all this?

If you didn't know about this *hidden side* of bread, it's for a simple reason: health authorities are faced with a difficult dilemma!

Their aim is to improve the situation of those who eat the worst, like Mr Dupont, who eats chips, Chips, cold cuts and biscuits all day.

And for Mr. Dupont, wholemeal bread would be a step forward, because it contains fibre, vitamins and minerals!

So the authorities do not want to demonise bread, for fear that people will turn to even more unhealthy alternatives!

But if you, dear reader, are concerned about your health, then you have much better things to do than 'classic' bread.

If you really care about your daily bread

Ideally, as you can see, bread should be rich in fibre and vitamins, low in fast sugars and gluten, and free of pesticides, phytic acid and acrylamide.

If you want to use wheat flour, it is impossible to meet all these criteria. But you can still come close

Because there is a whole wheat bread that is much more interesting than the others: organic sourdough bread. Organic bread, by definition, avoids pesticides. As for sourdough fermentation (which replaces the use of yeast), it is triply interesting because it :

- Lowers the glycemic index of your bread, which reduces the harmful effects of fast sugars on your weight and health;
- Activates phytase, the enzyme that destroys phytic acid, allowing you to better absorb minerals such as zinc;
- Partially hydrolyses the gluten, which makes the bread a little more digestible.

And you can further improve the quality of your bread by choosing breads containing ancient wheats, which are less rich in gluten than modern wheats.

And to reduce your acrylamide intake, avoid over toasting your bread, and leave out the crust, especially if it is dark or burnt.

The ideal bread

Personally, however, I think that the ideal bread is still gluten-free bread, homemade from eggs and almond flour. I found several really healthy, delicious and quick recipes [in Benjamin Dariouch's "Gluten Free Milk Free" cooking course](#). One of these recipes is available for free [here](#).

These gluten-free breads really do meet all the health criteria. For diabetics and those suffering from inflammatory diseases, they are a lifesaver.

An additional advantage is that, unlike traditional bread, they last a whole week, provided they are well wrapped in plastic film, wrapped in a tea towel and stored in the fridge. So there's no waste!

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