



USA Rice Provides Essential Nutrients for Women Folic Acid, Iron and Fiber: Rice Dishes Up Surprising Health Benefits

Research is beginning to better understand the gender-specific relationships between food, nutrients and risk for certain diseases. There are many new studies focusing on women that prove that women's diets can help prevent chronic diseases like heart disease and certain cancers as well as many other conditions. Rice is a perfect example of a nutritious dietary staple that contains essential nutrients, like folic acid and iron, which are important for health of women of all ages.

Folic Acid and Iron: Nutrients of Concern

Since 1998, virtually all white rice in the U.S. is enriched with the B-vitamin folic acid, which is protective against neural tube birth defects (NTD). In fact, evidence confirms that the folic acid fortification program has to date helped prevent 26 percent of NTD in the United States.

"The majority of women in the U.S. still don't meet their daily requirements for iron and folic acid, two nutrients that are critical for women," says Jeanne Blankenship, MS RD, chair-elect, Women's Health and Reproductive Nutrition, a practice group of the American Dietetic Association. "Rice is a great way for moms and moms-to-be to up their folic acid intake. From lean meats and low-fat dairy products, to fruits, nuts and vegetables, rice adds nutrition, texture and interest to any dish it accompanies."

It is recommended that all women of childbearing age need 400 micrograms of folic acid daily to help prevent certain birth defects, if they should become pregnant. Women are also prone to iron-deficiency anemia, which drains one's energy. In addition, folic acid has recently been found to help decrease the risk of stroke among women by as much as three percent per year since the U.S. Centers for Disease Control's mandatory folic acid fortification program of grains in 1998.

Folic acid helps to lower blood homocysteine levels, which is now believed to be an independent risk factor for heart disease, including heart attack and stroke. And new research from the March issue of the American Heart Association journal *Circulation* found that folic acid fortification also helps to reduce deaths from stroke.

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Rice. A World of Great Ideas

Rice and Weight Control

With the majority of women in the U.S. watching their weight, rice can also help women win the battle of the bulge. Rice is low in calories, providing 103-108 calories per half-cup cooked serving. A study conducted by Iowa State University found that people who eat rice have healthier diets, eat more fruits and vegetables, consume less added sugar and fat and are likely to have a lower body mass index than non-rice eaters. And because rice is primarily comprised of complex carbohydrates, it has a moderate glycemic index (GI) value, which some research suggests, may help control blood sugar levels and food cravings.

Research also shows that women who consume the most whole grains, like brown rice, tend to be leaner than those who eat the most refined or empty carbohydrate calories, from sweets. It is unclear how whole grains help control body weight but it is theorized that they are digested more slowly and therefore, are more filling. Whole grains also generally contain more fiber than enriched options and fiber is also thought to help achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

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Rice Recipes

Starting the day with a nutritious a.m. meal is one of the best ways women can take care of themselves. Below are two nutritious rice recipes that are great for breakfast—or anytime. **For more rice information, recipes and tips on creating Healthy Rice Bowls, visit www.usarice.com**

RICE AND EASY VEGGIE QUICHE

Yield: Makes 8 servings (2 triangles each).

4 cups cooked rice, cooled

8 eggs, well beaten

1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided

1 cup milk

1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt

1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1/4 teaspoon ground red pepper

1 10-ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and pressed

1 cup (4 ounces) shredded mozzarella cheese

1 medium fresh tomato, diced

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Stir rice, 1/2 cup beaten eggs, and 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese in large bowl until well blended. Press rice mixture into bottom of lightly greased 13x9x2-inch baking dish.

Beat remaining eggs, milk, salt, nutmeg and pepper until well blended. Stir in spinach and mozzarella cheese. Pour over rice, spreading spinach evenly. Sprinkle with tomato and remaining 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese. Bake in preheated 350 degree oven until knife inserted near center comes out clean, about 40 to 50 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes before serving. To serve, cut quiche into 8 squares; cut each square diagonally into 2 triangles.

Nutrition Facts

Calories 254

Total Fat 11g

Cholesterol 240mg

Sodium 365mg

Total Carbohydrate 23g

Dietary Fiber 1g

Protein 15g

PEACHY BREAKFAST RICE

Yield: Makes 6 servings.

1 16-ounce can peach slices, in juice

3 cups hot cooked rice

3/4 cup milk

1/4 cup brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Drain peaches, reserve juice. Cut peaches into chunks; set aside.

Combine rice in medium-size saucepan with reserved juice from peaches, heat over medium heat until liquid is absorbed. Add 3/4 cup milk, continue cooking until thick and creamy. Add brown sugar and cinnamon; stir until combined. Fold in peaches. Serve hot.

Nutrition Facts

Calories 169

Total Fat 1g

Cholesterol 4mg

Sodium 22mg

Total Carbohydrate 37g

Dietary Fiber 1g

Protein 3g

The USA Rice Federation is the national advocate for all segments of the US rice industry, conducting programs to build awareness of the many attributes of rice and increasing worldwide demand for U.S. rice.