



Supermarket Guide

Hot Cereals for Health



Nothing is better than starting off a cool

morning with a steaming bowl of hot cereal. In addition to warming you and tasting great, hot cereal can be low in fat, high in fiber, and a great source of whole grains. This breakfast, combined with a good protein choice like milk, soy milk or nuts, and unsweetened fruit, can help set you up for a healthy day. Today, there are a variety of hot cereals in supermarkets in easy packages, pouches and cups, containing all sorts of ingredients, such as hemp, flax, and berries. But with so many options, it can be tough to know if your cereal is a healthy, nutrient-packed breakfast or the equivalent of a sugar-coated cold cereal.

We scanned dozens of hot morning cereals, and found some products with as much sodium as a medium-sized order of fries, as much sugar as two-thirds of a Milky Way candy bar, and as much fat as three strips of bacon. But, we also found many hot cereals that can fit into a healthy breakfast.

Helpful hints. Keep these tips in mind to make the most of your morning cereal.

- **Top it with milk.** Boost your calcium and protein intake at breakfast by using low-fat milk instead of water to cook your cereal. Keep in mind that it may take a bit longer to cook with added milk.
- **Jazz it up.** Many people opt for flavored cereal pouches because plain hot cereal is just so... plain. But if you choose plain, you can doctor it up yourself to boost taste and nutrition, with much less sugar and sodium than those flavored packets. Spices like cinnamon and nutmeg, ingredients such as dried or fresh fruit, chopped nuts, or hemp and flax seeds, and even extracts like vanilla or coconut can add loads of flavor and texture, as well as nutrition.
- **DIY.** Homemade hot cereal from scratch can be a lot less expensive and better for the environment (less packaging means less trash). Make a large batch of hot breakfast porridge, such as oatmeal (old-fashioned or steel cut), quinoa, farro, amaranth, or teff, and reheat it in serving sizes on busy mornings. Don't add the toppings until after you reheat it, to retain a nice texture.

—Heidi McIndoo, M.S., R.D.

Hot Cereals Nutrition Comparison

As with all EN comparisons, this is only a sampling of what's available. Products are listed alphabetically.

✓ = **EN's Picks.** Plain picks contain no more than 150 calories (8% DV), 5 g sugar, 170 mg sodium (7% DV), and at least 3 g fiber (12% DV). Flavored packet picks contain no more than 210 calories (11% DV), 11 g sugar, 170 mg sodium (7% DV), and at least 3 g fiber (12% DV). Single serving pouches/cups picks contain no more than 250 calories (13% DV), 14 g sugar, 250 mg sodium (10% DV), and at least 4 g fiber (16% DV).

HOT CEREAL	Serving (g)	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Sodium (mg)	Protein (g)
PLAIN PACKETS									
✓ 365 Organic Instant Oatmeal Multigrain with Flax	40	140	3	0	27	4	0	0	5
365 Organic Instant Oatmeal Oats & Flax	40	150	2	0	29	3	11	130	4
✓ 365 Organic Instant Oatmeal Original	40	150	2.5	0	27	4	<1	0	6
✓ Arrowhead Mills Organic Instant Oatmeal with Flax	35	140	3	0	24	4	4	70	5
✓ Country Choice Organic Oats Quick Cook Steel Cut	40	150	3	0	27	4	1	0	5
Cream of Wheat Instant Hot Cereal Original	28	100	0	0	20	1	0	170	3
✓ Cream of Wheat Instant Whole Grain Healthy Grain	45	150	1	0	31	5	1	170	6
Mom's Best Naturals Multigrain Hot Cereal Plain Grain	42	160	3	0	28	3	1	80	6
Nature's Path Organic Hot Oatmeal Flax Plus	50	210	3	0.5	38	5	10	140	6
Nature's Path Organic Hot Oatmeal Hemp Plus	40	160	2.5	0	30	4	6	105	5
✓ Quaker Instant Oatmeal Original	28	100	2	0	19	3	0	75	4
Trader Joe's Oatmeal Complete	40	170	3	0.5	29	4	2	40	7
Trader Joe's Organic Instant Oatmeal Oats & Flax	40	150	2	0	29	3	11	130	4
FLAVORED PACKETS									
365 Organic Instant Oatmeal Cinnamon & Spice	40	150	1.5	0	30	3	13	90	4
Cream of Wheat Hot Cereal Cinnabon	35	130	0	0	29	1	14	170	2
✓ Dr. McDougall's Organic Instant Oatmeal Light Apple Cinn	30	120	1.5	0	22	3	6	110	3
✓ Kashi Go Lean All Natural Instant Hot Cereal Truly Vanilla	40	150	2	0	25	7	6	100	9
✓ Kashi Go Lean Hearty Instant Hot Cereal Honey & Cinnamon	40	150	2	0	26	5	7	100	8
Kashi Heart to Heart Instant Oatmeal Apple Cinnamon	43	160	2	0	33	5	12	110	4
Mom's Best Naturals Multigrain Cinnamon Plum Spiced	43	160	2.5	0	28	3	9	220	5
✓ Nature's Path Organic Hot Oatmeal Maple Nut	50	210	4	0.5	38	4	11	100	5
Nature's Path Organic Hot Oatmeal Multigrain Raisin	50	180	1	0	39	4	18	100	4
✓ Nature's Path Organic Optimum Cranberry Ginger	40	150	2	0	31	3	11	160	4
Quaker High Fiber Cinnamon Swirl	45	160	2	0.5	34	10	7	210	4
Quaker Lower Sugar Maple & Brown Sugar	34	120	2	0	24	3	4	290	4
Quaker Maple & Brown Sugar	43	160	2	0.5	32	3	12	260	4
Quaker Weight Control Maple & Brown Sugar	45	160	3	0.5	29	6	1	290	7
Three Sisters Old Fashioned Oatmeal Dark Chocolate	44	160	2.5	0.5	33	3	12	220	4
Three Sisters Organic Hot Cereal Pomegranate	43	160	2.5	0	31	4	9	220	6
Trader Joe's Apples & Cinnamon Instant Oatmeal	35	130	1.5	0	27	3	12	170	3
✓ Trader Joe's Oatmeal Heart Healthy Whole Grain Blueberry	45	160	2.5	0	30	6	10	90	4
Trader Joe's Oatmeal Complete Maple & Brown Sugar	50	210	3	0.5	38	4	9	200	7
Trader Joe's Organic Cinnamon Spice Instant Oatmeal	40	150	1.5	0	30	2.5	13	90	4
SINGLE SERVING POUCHES/CUPS									
Cocomama Quinoa Honey Almond Cereal	142	240	10	8	31	2	13	180	5
Cocomama Quinoa Cereal Wild Blueberry	142	220	8	6	31	2	13	180	4
✓ Grandy Oats Organic Oatmeal with Fruit	60	210	2.5	0	42	5	12	30	7
Hot & Fit Cereal Earnest Eats American Blend	67	280	8	1	45	6	13	75	8
Hot & Fit Cereal Earnest Eats Asia Blend	67	280	8	1	45	7	12	75	8
Hot & Fit Cereal Earnest Eats Mayan Blend	67	290	9	1.5	43	7	10	75	9
Quaker Instant Oatmeal Express Cinnamon Roll	54	200	2.5	0.5	41	4	17	250	5
Quaker Instant Oatmeal Baked Apple	54	200	2.5	0.5	42	4	19	320	4
Quaker Instant Oatmeal Golden Brown Sugar	54	200	2.5	0.5	42	3	18	290	5
Quaker Real Medleys Peach Almond Oatmeal	75	290	7	1	51	6	19	150	8
✓ Quaker Real Medleys Summer Berry Oatmeal	70	250	3	0.5	51	7	14	250	8
✓ Trader Joe's Steel Cut Oatmeal (frozen, 2 packages per box)	227	150	2.5	0	27	4	7	40	5

Note: pkg=package, g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value, Daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: food labels. Nutritional for all packets are based on 1 packet.