ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals, frequently advertised to children by participants in the Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI), overall are now even better nutritionally than the cereals advertised just a few years ago. CFBAI, operated by the Council of Better Business Bureaus, is a voluntary advertising self-regulation program that has set nutrition standards for what foods its participants may advertise to children under age 12.

Under CFBAI’s uniform nutrition criteria, cereals with a one-ounce serving size must contain no more than 10 grams of total sugars per serving. Previously, CFBAI permitted such cereals to have up to 12 grams of sugars per serving. Before CFBAI started, these cereals may have contained as much as 15 grams per serving.

Under self-regulation, CFBAI participants have reduced sugars, calories or sodium and increased the amount of whole grains, fiber, and/or vitamins and minerals in the RTE cereals they advertise to children. This snapshot reports on the nutritional content of the 30 RTE cereals with a one-ounce serving size on CFBAI’s June 2015 product list.

Cereals contain modest amounts of calories, sugar, sodium and saturated fat.

**Calories.** All of the cereals contain no more than 130 calories and most contain no more than 110 calories per serving.

**Sugars.** All contain no more than 10 grams, and half contain no more than 9 grams per serving.

See Figure 1. By percentage of weight, more than three-fourths contain no more than 35% sugar, and one-third contain no more than 30% sugar per serving.

**Sodium.** None contain more than 240 mg, and 80% contain no more than 170 mg per serving.

**Saturated fat.** None have more than 1 gram, 90% no more than 0.5 gram, and two-thirds contain 0 grams per serving.

![Figure 1. Sugar Content of Cereals (2009 - 2015)](image)
Cereals advertised to children are rich in whole grains and positive nutrients

**Whole grains.** For two-thirds of the cereals, whole grains are listed as the first ingredient in the ingredients statement, more than twice as many compared to 2012. Most (77%, or 23/30) contain at least 8 grams of whole grains, and one-third contain even more. (See Figure 2.)

**Nutrients of concern.** The participants’ cereals also provide at least a “good” source of at least one nutrient that the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans call “nutrients of public health concern.” Most are a “good” source of two of these nutrients.

**Calcium.** More than half of the cereals are a “good” source of calcium.

**Vitamin D.** All but one are a “good” source, and 20% are an “excellent” source of vitamin D.

**Fiber.** Some (23%, or 7/30) are at least a “good” source of dietary fiber.

Cereals meeting CFBAI’s criteria can contribute to a healthy diet

Research shows that children who eat RTE cereal, presweetened or non-presweetened, tend to have healthier body weights than those who do not eat cereal. Multiple studies have confirmed the positive association between RTE cereal consumption in children and healthier body weights and/or better nutrient intakes compared to children who skip breakfast or eat a different breakfast.

CFBAI’s criteria have led to positive changes in cereals

CFBAI’s uniform nutrition criteria have driven numerous improvements to the nutritional quality of cereals advertised to children. The most significant impact of CFBAI’s criteria has been reductions in sugar and increases in whole grain. After the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans are issued, CFBAI will review its nutrition criteria and determine whether they should be further strengthened.

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1 CFBAI’s criteria permit cereals with a larger serving size to contain no more than 12 grams of total sugars per serving. One cereal on CFBAI’s product list has a 54-gram serving size and contains 11 grams of sugar.

2 This Snapshot updates the 2014 Cereals Snapshot, reflecting differences in what cereals are included on the list and improvements to the cereals that already were on the list.

3 The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (at 37) consider 8 grams to be a significant amount of whole grains per ounce-equivalent.

4 A “good” source contains 10 to 19% of the government-established Daily Value (DV) for a particular nutrient. An “excellent” source contains at least 20% DV.