ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals that participants in the Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI) advertise to children are a nutrient dense breakfast option that can contribute to a healthy diet.

CFBAI participants have reduced sugars, calories or sodium and increased the amount of whole grains, fiber, and/or vitamins and minerals in cereals advertised to kids. Sometimes the names are the same, but over the last 10 years the cereal inside has improved. CFBAI’s uniform nutrition criteria for cereals and all foods that its participants advertise to children under age 12 have driven improvements in the foods advertised on kids’ media. This Snapshot provides a nutritional overview of the 31 RTE cereals on CFBAI’s Product List in 2017.

RTE cereals provide a meaningful amount of whole grains, vitamins, minerals, or other key essential nutrients. Consuming these nutrients from cereals can increase children’s intake of under-consumed nutrients, without packing on calories, sugar or sodium. Milk usually accompanies cereals and adds calcium, protein and Vitamin D.

Calories. All of the cereals contain no more than 130 calories.

Sugars. Before CFBAI, cereals may have contained as much as 16 grams per serving. Now all cereals contain no more than 10 grams of sugar, and the majority contain fewer than 10 grams.

Sodium. More than 75% contain no more than 170 mg per serving.

Saturated fat. Nearly all cereals (97%) have no more than 0.5 grams per serving; more than 75% contain 0 grams.
Whole grains. Whole grains are the first ingredient on the label for about 75% of the cereals on CFBAI’s Product List. Over 80% contain a half-serving or more, up from 20% in 2009.

Beneficial nutrients. Nearly all cereals are a good source of vitamin D, and more than half are also a good source of calcium. Both nutrients are critical for bone-building. Many cereals provide at least a “good” source of other nutrients that are under-consumed according to the 2015 Dietary Guidelines.

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

Cereals that CFBAI participants advertise to children now are even better nutritionally than just a few years ago.

Children who eat RTE cereal, presweetened or non-presweetened, have a lower risk of being overweight than those who do not eat cereal. Multiple studies have found a positive association between RTE cereal consumption in children and healthier body weights compared to children who skip breakfast or eat a different breakfast.

For more information about CFBAI, visit bbbprograms.org/programs/cfbai

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1 July 2017 CFBAI Product List.
2 Fortified cereals contribute essential nutrients such as vitamin A, thiamin, niacin, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium nd/or potassium.
3 Cereals with a larger serving size may 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.)
4 The 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend making at least half of grains whole grains. According to USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service guidance on whole-grain claims, “If a food has at least 8 grams of whole grains per ounce-equivalent, it is at least half whole grains.”
5 A “good” source contains 10 to 19% of the government-established Daily Value (DV) for a particular nutrient. The four under-consumed nutrients of public health concern are calcium, fiber, potassium, and vitamin D.