

Fiber in the Diet

What is fiber?

Dietary fiber is the part of plants that cannot be digested. There are 2 kinds of dietary fiber:

- Insoluble fiber adds bulk to keep foods moving through your digestive system.
- Soluble fiber holds water that helps soften the stool for easy bowel movements.

If you do not have enough fiber in your diet, you may have constipation. Your bowel movements may be small, hard, and dry.

Fiber is an important part of your diet even though it passes through your body. A high-fiber diet can:

- Lower cholesterol levels.
- Help you have regular bowel movements.
- Improve your blood sugar level if you have diabetes.
- Treat intestinal problems such as pain, diarrhea, and constipation that comes and goes.
- Help you lose weight. High-fiber foods are usually lower in calories and provide a feeling of fullness.

Breads, cereals, and pasta made with whole-grain flour, brown and wild rice, oats, bulgur, and quinoa are high-fiber foods. Breakfast cereals and most grain products list the fiber content on the label so you can know which products are high in fiber.

All fruits and vegetables also contain fiber. Dried beans, peas, nuts, leafy vegetables, raisins, prunes, apples, berries and citrus fruits are all good sources of fiber.

How much fiber do I need in my diet?

You should have at least 14 grams (g) of fiber for every 1000 calories that you eat every day. Generally, women should have 25 grams of fiber and men should have 38 grams. Read the label on food packages to find out how much fiber a serving of a food provides. Foods containing more than 20% of the daily value of fiber per serving are considered high in fiber.

How can I add fiber to my diet?

When increasing the fiber in your diet, it is best to do so slowly. Eating too much fiber too quickly can cause discomfort, gas, and bloating. Start with small changes, like switching to whole-grain bread, and add a new source of fiber each week or two.

- Start your day with a high-fiber breakfast cereal.


- Eat more fruits and vegetables. Use carrot sticks or apple slices for snacks. Include fruits or vegetables with every meal. Cooked fiber is just as good as raw fiber.
- Eat whole-grain breads.
- Add whole grains, dried beans, and vegetables to casseroles.
- Serve fruit-based desserts.
- If you have constipation even though you have added high-fiber foods to your diet, make sure you are drinking enough fluids and talk to your healthcare provider about fiber laxatives. Psyllium is a soluble fiber that is often used for this purpose. It can be taken as a pill or as a powder that is mixed in a glass of water. Always read and follow the directions on the label carefully.

Adding fiber to your diet is easy, and a high-fiber diet can provide long-term health benefits. You may have some gas or bloating at first, but your body will usually adjust in time. If you keep having gas, you can try a supplement that can help you digest the gas-forming part of plant foods. The supplements are sold in liquid and pill form and you don't need a prescription for them. (Beano is one example.)


Developed by RelayHealth.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

Sources of Fiber in Foods

	Serving size	Grams of Fiber
Breads, cereals, grains		
100% All Bran	1/2 cup	9
Corn Flakes	1 cup	1
Oatmeal, cooked	1 cup	4.0
Rice, brown, long grain, cooked	1 cup	3
Rice, white, cooked	1/3 cup	1
Shredded Wheat	2 biscuits	6
White bread	1 slice	0.8
Whole grain bread	1 slice	2.0

	Serving size	Grams of Fiber
Fruits		
Apple, with skin	1 large	5
Apricot	1	1
Banana	1	3
Blackberries	1 cup	8
Blueberries	1 cup	4
Cantaloupe	1 cup	1
Dates	5	3
Grapefruit, pink	1/2	2.0
Nectarine	1	2
Orange	1 small	3
Peach	1	2
Pear	1 medium	5.1
Pineapple	1 cup	2.2
Plum	1 small	1
Prunes, dried	5	3.0
Raisins	1/4 cup	1
Strawberries	1 cup	3

	Serving size	Grams of Fiber
Vegetables		
Beans, baked, canned, plain	1 cup	10
Beans, green, cooked	1 cup	4.0
Beets, canned	1 cup	2
Broccoli, raw	1 cup	2
Cabbage, raw	1 cup	2
Carrots, raw	1 cup	4
Cauliflower, raw	1 cup	2
Celery, raw	1 cup	2
Corn, yellow, cooked	1 cup	4
Lentils, cooked	1 cup	15
Lettuce, romaine, raw	1 cup	1
Lettuce, iceberg, raw	1 cup	1
Peas, boiled	1 cup	9
Peas, split	1 cup	16
Potato, baked, fresh	1/2 potato	2
Sweet potato, cooked without skin	1/2 potato	3
Tomato, red, ripe	1 tomato	2
Winter squash, cooked	1 cup	6

	Serving size	Grams of Fiber
Nuts		
Almonds (22 nuts)	1 oz.	3
Peanuts, dry roasted (32 nuts)	1 oz.	2
Walnuts, English (14 halves)	1 oz.	2

Copyright ©2014 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All rights reserved.