

What is Dietary Fiber?

Fiber is the non-digestible part of plant food that we eat. Fiber is also known as “roughage,” “bulk,” and “crude fiber.” The average American diet contains 5–10 grams of fiber. The recommended amount of fiber for adults is 20–35 grams per day in a well-balanced diet.

There are two types of fiber:

Insoluble fiber prevents constipation. Because it is not digested, it passes through your body more quickly. Some foods that have insoluble fiber are whole grains, wheat bran, fruits and vegetables.

Soluble fiber swells and slows the take-up of sugar into the blood, helping to control blood sugar and promote a feeling of fullness. Some foods that have soluble fiber are oats, oat bran, berries, beans/legumes, barley, carrots, nuts and seeds.

What are the Benefits of Eating Fiber?

Insoluble Fiber:

- ✓ Prevents constipation
- ✓ May help prevent colon cancer

Soluble Fiber:

- ✓ Controls blood sugar levels
- ✓ Helps lower cholesterol

Both insoluble and soluble fibers prevent overeating and reduce hunger between meals.

To control high cholesterol, eat 5–10 grams of soluble fiber daily.

Tips to Add Fiber to Your Diet

1. Choose at least seven (7) fresh fruits and vegetables per day or two (2) cups of fruit and 2 ½ cups of vegetables per day. Eat whole fruits instead of juices.
2. Choose at least three (3) whole grains per day such as breads, cereals and crackers. Choose cereals with at least five (5) grams of fiber per serving size.
3. Add beans or lentils to soups and salads. Nuts and seeds are also good sources of fiber.
4. Drink plenty of water to help avoid constipation.
5. Add fiber to your diet a little at a time, over a few weeks, to avoid excess gas and bloating.

Increase Your Fiber Intake

Aim to eat 20–35 grams of total fiber per day. Include 6–10 grams of soluble fiber.

| <u>Choose</u> | <u>Food</u> | <u>Serving Size</u> | <u>Fiber (gm)</u> | <u>Soluble Fiber</u> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| High-Fiber Whole Grains | Fiber One cereal | ½ cup | 12 gm | 1 gm |
| | 100% bran cereals | 1/3 cup | 9 gm | 1 gm |
| | Bulgur wheat | ½ cup | 4 gm | 0 gm |
| | Wheat bran | 2 tbsp | 4 gm | 0.2gm |
| | Whole grain cereals | ½ cup | 3–5 gms | 0.5 gm |
| | 100% whole wheat bread | 1 slice (1 oz) | 2 gm | 0.3 gm |
| | Oatmeal | ½ cup | 2 gm | 1 gm |
| | Brown rice | ½ cup | 2 gm | 0.2 gm |
| Legumes/Beans | Kidney beans | ½ cup | 8 gm | 2 gm |
| | Black beans | ½ cup | 6 gm | 2 gm |
| | Lentils | ½ cup | 5 gm | 1 gm |
| | Soybeans (whole) | ½ cup | 5 gm | 2 gm |
| | Black-eyed peas | ½ cup | 4 gm | 0.5 gm |
| Seeds & Nuts | Flax seeds | 1 tbsp | 3 gm | 1 gm |
| | Peanut butter (chunky) | 2 tbsp | 2 gm | 1 gm |
| | Nuts | 6 nuts | 1–2 gms | 0.2 gm |
| High-Fiber Fruits & Vegetables | Apple/pear | 1 medium | 5 gm | 1 gm |
| | Carrots | 1 medium | 4 gm | 1 gm |
| | Potato (with skin) | 1 medium | 4 gm | 1 gm |
| | Broccoli | 1 cup | 4 gm | 1 gm |
| | Berries | 1 cup | 4–8 gms | 1 gm |
| | Orange | 1 small | 3 gm | 2 gm |
| | Dried fruit | 5 pieces | 2–3 gms | 1–2 gms |
| | Banana | 1 medium | 2 gm | 0.5 gm |
| | Zucchini | ½ cup | 1 gm | 1 gm |
| | Dark, leafy greens | 1 cup | 1–5 gms | 1–3 gms |
| | Lettuces | 1 cup | 1–2 gms | 0.1 gm |
| | Cantaloupe | 1 cup | 1 gm | 0.3 gm |
| | Tomato | 1 medium | 1 gm | 0.1 gm |

Sample Meal Plan

Breakfast

½ cup Raisin Bran cereal (4 gm)
4 oz skim milk
1 slice whole wheat bread (2 gm)
1 tsp margarine
2 egg whites

Total fiber = 6 gms

Lunch

1 cup split pea soup (8 gm)
1 slice rye bread (2 gm)
2 oz turkey
2 slices tomatoes (1 gm)
lite mayonnaise
1 cup berries (6 gm)

Total fiber = 17 gms

Dinner

3 oz grilled salmon
2/3 cup brown rice (3 gm)
1 cup steamed broccoli (4 gm)
mixed green salad w/endive (4 gm)
1 tbsp dressing
1 medium pear (5 gm)

Total fiber = 15 gms

Produced by the Center for Patient and Community Education in association with the Dietary Council at California Pacific Medical Center. Date: 4/06

© 2006 California Pacific Medical Center

Funded by: A generous donation from the Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Ciocca Foundation.

Note: The information provided in this material is intended to provide readers with accurate and timely information. It is not intended to substitute for information and personal medical advice, which you need to obtain directly from your doctors. If you have any additional questions related to treatment or the risks and benefits of treatment mentioned in this work, please direct these questions to your doctors.