

## Importance of Fibre

Fiber is the part of plant foods (fruits, vegetables, grains) that our bodies cannot digest or break down. Fiber is an important dietary substance to your health. Most fiber-containing foods are also good sources of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, which offer many health benefits. This guide provides basic information to help you increase fiber in your diet. If you are on any medication you may want to talk with your doctor about the impacts a high fiber diet may have on your health. There are two kinds of fiber: soluble and insoluble.

**Soluble fiber:** dissolves in water to form a gummy gel. It can slow down the passage of food from the stomach to the intestine. Examples include dried beans, oats, barley, bananas, potatoes, and soft parts of apples and pears.

**Insoluble fiber:** often referred to as "roughage" because it does not dissolve in water. It holds onto water, which helps produce softer, bulkier stools to help regulate bowel movements. Examples include whole bran, whole grain products, nuts, corn, carrots, grapes, berries, and peels of apples and pears.

Research has shown that a diet rich in fiber is associated with many health benefits, including the following:

**Lowers cholesterol:** Soluble fiber has been shown to lower cholesterol by binding to bile (composed of cholesterol) and taking it out of the body. This may help reduce the risk of heart disease.

**Better regulates blood sugar levels:** A high-fiber meal slows down the digestion of food into the intestines, which may help to keep blood sugars from rising rapidly.

**Weight control:** A high-fiber diet may help keep you fuller longer, which prevents overeating and hunger between meals.

May prevent intestinal cancer: Insoluble fiber increases the bulk and speed of food moving through the intestinal tract, which reduces time for harmful substances to build up.

**Constipation:** Constipation can often be relieved by increasing the fiber or roughage in your diet. Fiber works to help regulate bowel movements by pulling water into the colon to produce softer, bulkier stools. This action helps to promote better regularity.

### How much fiber should I eat?

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends consuming about 25-35 grams of total fiber per day, with 10-15 grams from soluble fiber or 14g of fiber per 1,000 calories. This can be accomplished by choosing 6 ounces of grains (3 or more ounces from whole grains), 2½ cups of vegetables, and 2 cups of fruit per day (based on a 2,000 calorie/day pattern). However, as we age, fiber requirements decrease. For those over the age of 70, the recommendation for women is 21 grams and for men 30 grams of total fiber per day.

- Add fiber to your diet slowly. Too much fiber all at once may cause cramping, bloating, and constipation.
- When adding fiber to your diet, be sure to drink adequate fluids (at least 64 ounces or 8 cups per day) to prevent constipation.

Black beans - Serving size: 1 cup Fiber: 15 grams

Lentils - Serving size: 1 cup (cooked) Fiber: 15 grams

Split peas - Serving size: ¼ cup Fiber: eight grams

Banana - 1 large banana Fibre: 3.5g

Raspberries - Serving size: 1 cup Fiber: 8 grams

Blackberries - Serving size: 1 cup Fiber: 7.6 grams

Almonds - Serving size: 2 oz Fiber: 7 grams

Peanuts or Sunflower seeds - Serving Size: 1/4 cup Fiber (grams): 3

Walnuts - Serving Size: 1/4 cup Fiber (grams): 2

Flaxseed (ground) - Serving Size: 2 tbsp Fiber (grams): 4

Chia seeds - Serving size: 2 tablespoons Fiber: 8 grams

Pumpkin seeds - 1/2 cup raw: Fiber: 12 grams

Broccoli - Serving size: 1 cup Fiber: 5 grams

Sweet potato - Serving size: 1 cup Fiber: 4 grams

Apples - Serving size: 1 medium apple Fiber: 4 grams

Pear - Serving size: 1 medium pear Fiber: 6 grams

Kidney beans - Serving size: 1 cup Fiber: 12.2 grams

Avocado - Serving size: ½ avocado Fiber: 5 grams

Quinoa - Serving size: 1 cup Fiber: 5 grams

Artichokes - Serving size: 1 vegetable Fiber: 6.8 grams

Oatmeal - Serving size: ½ cup dry Fiber: 3.7 grams

Brussels sprouts - Serving size: 1 cup Fiber: 4 grams