

## Fiber in Your Diet

**Purpose:** Dietary Fiber is the part of a plant that cannot be broken down during digestion. It provides a plant with its structure. A diet that is high in fiber can help to prevent and treat constipation, and help to prevent or treat other gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and metabolic disease including diverticular disease (diverticulosis), cancer of the colon, irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, hypercholesterolemia, and obesity. Both soluble and insoluble fibers are included. Most foods with fiber have both soluble and insoluble fiber. *Soluble fiber* forms a gel and absorbs water, slowing down the release of food from the stomach. *Insoluble fiber* or roughage remains virtually intact as it goes through the body.

**Fiber and the colon:** The main job of the colon is to complete the digestion process, by removing the excess water from food wastes entering the small intestine. Fiber adds bulk to these food wastes which promotes wavelike contractions that keep food moving through the intestines. If food is allowed to move too quickly through, watery stools or diarrhea results and if it is slowed too much, water is removed causing constipation.

**How much fiber?** The recommendations for daily fiber intake are 20-35 grams of fiber per day. This should equate to 7-10 grams per 1000 calories. Fiber rich foods include: fruits, legumes, vegetables, whole-grain breads, and cereals. Consumption of adequate amounts of liquid (at least eight 8-oz glasses per day) in conjunction with high fiber intake is recommended. Fiber intake should be gradually increased to minimize potentially adverse side effects such as abdominal distress, bloating, flatulence, cramps, and diarrhea.

**Fiber and Diverticulosis:** A high-fiber diet is the preferred treatment for the prevention of acute flare ups of diverticular disease. It was once recommended to avoid foods containing seeds, nuts, and hulls, however most gastroenterologists allow and even encourage consuming these foods depending on an individual's tolerance.

**Dietary Fiber Supplements:** Some people don't tolerate fibrous foods well. If you are not able to obtain enough fiber from food alone, you may wish to consider the use of stool softening and bulking agents. These products absorb water and produce the bulk necessary for your digestive tract to perform naturally. Citrucel, Metamucil, FiberCon, Fiberall, Per Diem Fiber are some such products. See label for fiber amounts per serving and ask your practitioner about regular use.

**Remember:**

- A diet high in fiber emphasizes Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans and legumes and whole grain cereals.
- Drink plenty of liquids, including milk, fruit & vegetable juices and at least 6-8 cups of water each day.
- Eat slowly

### Sample Foods and Fiber Content

Food Class	Suggested Daily Servings	Recommended choices	2.5 to 3.4 g Fiber per serving	3.5 to 4.9 g Fiber per serving	High in Fiber 5g or more/serving
Milk And milk products	2-3	Milk (fresh, dried or evaporated), cream, yogurt, cheese and cottage cheese	<b>Not a contributor of fiber but still recommend regular daily servings for fluid and other nutrient needs.</b>		
Meats and protein alternatives	2 servings (2-3 oz. portions)	Fresh or frozen meat, poultry and fish, canned meats (tuna and salmon), eggs, nuts, seeds, dry beans or peas. Most meat & poultry choices should be lean or very lean.			Lentils Lima Beans Black Beans Kidney Beans Great Northern beans Green peas Pinto beans Chickpeas Refried beans

Food Class	Suggested Daily Servings	Recommended choices	2.5 to 3.4 g Fiber per serving	3.5 to 4.9 g Fiber per serving	High in Fiber 5g or more/serving
Vegetables	1-4 cups (4-6 servings)	Fresh, canned or frozen served in any form. 100% vegetable juices. <b>Most vegetables contain some fiber. Raw are higher in amount that cooked. Skins should be eaten for most fiber per portion.</b>	Asparagus (frozen) Beets (canned) Cabbage Green beans(canned) Carrots	Baked Potato w/ skin Brown long grain rice Brussels sprouts Cauliflower Sweet potato, baked	Spinach (frozen) Winter squash (all types) Green peas Broccoli
Fruits	1-2 ½ cups (2-5 Servings)	Fresh, frozen or canned fruits and 100% juices of all kinds. <b>Most fruits contain some fiber. Raw are higher in amount that cooked. Skins should be eaten for most fiber per portion.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apple (with skin)</li> <li>• Banana</li> <li>• Orange</li> <li>• Strawberries (1 cup)</li> <li>• Fruit cocktail (1cup)</li> </ul>	Blueberries (1 cup) Mango (1) Plantain	Raspberries (1cup) Blackberries (1cup) Papaya Pear
Grains and grain products	3-10	Use whole-grain or enriched breads, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, grits, white, brown or wild rice, popcorn, cornbread, crackers, pretzels, buns, rolls, English muffins. <b>It is recommended to use at least 3 servings of whole-grain cereals daily.</b>	<i>Nutri-Grain</i> ® pancakes (3) <i>Nutri-Grain</i> ® whole wheat waffles (2) Bread, rye Bread, wheat Wafer crackers, rye (1) Granola Oatmeal Wild rice	Oat Bran Flakes Mueslix cereal	All Bran cereals Bran buds Bran Chex 100% Bran Bulgur, Barley Cracklin Oat Bran. Raisin Bran Mini-Wheats Whole wheat Pasta, Whole grain flour
Nuts, seeds	4-5 a week	All varieties of nuts, seeds. <b>Most are fair sources of some fiber.</b>	Sunflower seeds, dry roasted (1 oz.) Pecans (1 oz.) Pistachio (1 oz.)	Almonds (1 oz.)	
Fats and Oils	Use sparingly not generously 2-3 times a day	Margarine, butter, mayonnaise, butter, salad dressing, gravies, cream sauces, sour cream, bacon. Make most of your fats sources from fish, nuts & vegetable oils (Olive & canola esp.)			
Fluids	6-8 cups	Water and other fluids, such as coffee, tea, fruit juice, vegetable juice, lemonade, broth or soup, or soft drink carbonated beverages.	Many vegetable stews		Chili with beans Most thick bean soups
Sweets	1 or fewer per day	All sweets and desserts in limited portions and amounts.			
Seasonings Condiments Sauces	As desired	Encourage limited quantities of all that are high in salt for normal healthy diet.			

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