



All About Fiber

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Fiber is the firm wall of plant cells which makes them stiff, not unlike the skeleton in our own bodies. These walls are resistant to digestion. There are two kinds of fiber, soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber is digested by bacteria in the colon. Examples of soluble fiber are: oat bran and psyllium. Soluble fiber can help lower blood cholesterol. Insoluble fiber probably works best for constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, and to reduce the risk of diverticulitis attacks. Examples include: wheat bran, cereal grains, and the peels of various fruits such as apples and pears.

Why is fiber important?

Fiber adds bulk to the stool. It is for this reason that fiber is sometimes referred to bulk or roughage. Fiber works by helping the stool retain water and also helps to move material along the colon more quickly; it "keeps things moving". A high fiber, low animal fat diet has been shown to reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes, breast cancer and uterine cancer. It is essential in maintaining a stable body weight. We believe that a high fiber, low animal fat reduces the risk of colon cancer, but given recent research the beneficial effects of high fiber in reducing colon cancer has come under scrutiny.

Where do I get fiber and how much is the right amount?

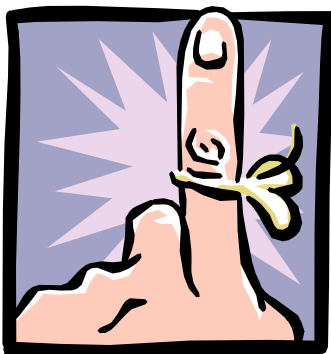
The average American diet includes only ten to twenty grams of fiber daily. Your goal should be thirty to thirty five grams daily. There are a variety of foods high in fiber. Fruits, vegetables, and whole grain breads, pasta are excellent examples. Try substituting brown rice for white rice-- it has triple the fiber! Bran is also a great source of fiber, and it can be found in various commercial cereal products, but also unprocessed in health food stores. Bran can be easily added as filler for casseroles and other mixed dishes.

What about fiber supplements- should I take them?

There are a number of commercially available fiber supplements which you can purchase. These products often contain psyllium, but other fiber supplements (with names like Methylcellulose and Polycarbophil) are also available. These products can be found in pharmacies or grocery stores and do not require a prescription. Fiber supplements have variable amounts of fiber so check with your doctor. You may decide to take these to supplement your efforts to take a high fiber diet.

Some standard supplements and their fiber contents:

Metamucil	3.4 grams fiber/tsp
Per Diem	4.3 grams fiber/tsp
Konsyl	6 grams fiber/tsp



Remember

- Don't forget to drink plenty of fluids. A goal of eight 8-ounce glasses of water daily is reasonable.
- A common mistake is to increase the amount of fiber too quickly when the body is not accustomed to it. This may produce some unpleasant side effects, especially excessive gas, and cause you to become discouraged. Add fiber slowly
- If you're very constipated, fiber will likely make you feel even worse. Hold the fiber until you get "cleaned out", then add the fiber slowly while using a gentle laxative.

High Fiber Diet

Breads, cereals, grains, pasta - Eat whole grain pasta, potatoes with skins, brown rice, and bran.

Vegetables - Eat at least four to six servings per day. You may eat fresh, canned, or frozen vegetables and vegetable juices. Consider beans to increase protein intake.

Fruits - At least three servings a day. You may eat fresh, frozen, dried, or canned fruits.

Beverages - Have at least 8 eight-ounce glasses a day of water, tea, natural fruit drinks, and vegetable juices. Avoid coffee and sodas, they dehydrate.

Food Sources of Fiber

Vegetables

Green beans	1/2 cup	2 grams
Kidney beans	1/2 cup	5 grams
Broccoli	1/2 cup	2.5 grams
Brussels sprouts	1/2 cup	3.5 grams
Carrots	1/2 cup	2.5 grams
Corn	1/2 cup	3 grams
Green peas	1/2 cup	3.5 grams
Lettuce	1/2 cup	0.5 grams
Potato (with skin)	1/2 cup	2 grams

Fruits

Apple	1 medium	2.5 grams
Banana	1	2 grams
Blackberries	1 cup	7 grams
Cantaloupe	1 wedge	1 grams
Grapefruit	1 medium	3.5 grams
Grapes	1 cup	1 gram
Orange	1 medium	3 grams
Pear	1 medium	4.5 grams
Prunes	1 cup	13.5 grams
Raspberries	1 cup	6 grams
Strawberries	1 cup	3.5 gram

Grain Products

Bread, white	1 slice	0.5 grams
Bread, whole wheat	1 slice	2 grams
Cereal, bran	1 oz	8.5 grams
Cereal, corn flakes	1 oz	0.5 grams
Cereal, oat bran	1 oz	4 grams
Shredded wheat	1 oz	2.5 grams
Crackers, graham	4 squares	1 gram
Crackers, saltine	10 regular	1 gram
Rice, brown	1/2 cup	5 grams
Rice, white	1/2 cup	1.5 grams
Spaghetti	2 ounces	2.5 grams

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