

## Increasing Your Fiber Intake

### What is fiber?

Fiber is the portion of plant foods that cannot be digested. There are two kinds of fiber, both of which are keys to a healthy diet and a healthy digestive system:

- **Soluble fiber** aids in bulking and moving food through the gut. It forms a gel when mixed with liquid.
- **Insoluble fiber** does not mix with liquids and passes through the GI tract mostly intact. It is sometimes called “roughage.”

### Why do I need to eat it?

Fiber has many important roles:

- Helps maintain regular bowel movements. More fiber can improve both diarrhea and constipation.
- Reduces the risk of developing hemorrhoids.
- Lowers LDL or “bad” cholesterol levels, which lowers risk of heart disease.
- Regulates blood sugar levels in people with diabetes.
- Provides a feeling of fullness and may help with weight loss.

### How much do I need?

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends:

- For women, 25 grams per day under age 50 and 21 grams per day over age 50.
- For men, 38 grams per day under age 50 and 30 grams per day over age 50.

### What foods are the best sources?

Plant foods contain fiber, but some more than others. Best choices are:

- Whole grains and high fiber cereals.
- Dried beans and legumes.
- Fruits and vegetables, especially raw.

### What about fiber supplements?

If you need to add more fiber than you can get in your diet, consider:

- **Type of Fiber:** The major brands of fiber supplements (Metamucil®, Konsyl®, Citrucel®, Benefiber®, Fibercon®) all use soluble fiber and work in the same way.
- **Flavorings and Mixing:** Many of the powdered brands have added flavoring and are mixed with just water. Other varieties are “clear” and can be added to numerous beverages and food items. Some brands also offer a “wafer” form. It’s up to you!

## Good Sources of Dietary Fiber

**Tip:** Increasing the fiber in your diet **gradually** may help minimize bloating and discomfort. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids as you increase your fiber intake.

<b>Fruits</b>	<b>Serving size</b>	<b>Total fiber (grams)</b>
Raspberries	1 cup	8.0
Pear, with skin	1 medium	5.5
Apple, with skin	1 medium	4.4
Strawberries (halves)	1 1/4 cup	3.8
Banana	1 medium	3.1
Orange	1 medium	3.1
Figs, dried	2 medium	1.6
<b>Grains, cereal and pasta</b>	<b>Serving size</b>	<b>Total fiber (grams)</b>
Spaghetti, whole-wheat, cooked	1 cup	6.2
Barley, pearled, cooked	1 cup	6.0
Bran flakes	3/4 cup	5.3
Oat bran muffin	1 medium	5.2
Oatmeal, quick, regular or instant, cooked	1 cup	4.0
Popcorn, air-popped	3 cups	3.5
Brown rice, cooked	1 cup	3.5
Bread, rye	1 slice	1.9
Bread, whole-wheat or multigrain	1 slice	1.9
<b>Legumes, nuts and seeds</b>	<b>Serving size</b>	<b>Total fiber (grams)</b>
Split peas, cooked	1 cup	16.3
Lentils, cooked	1 cup	15.6
Black beans, cooked	1 cup	15.0
Lima beans, cooked	1 cup	13.2
Baked beans, vegetarian, canned, cooked	1 cup	10.4
Sunflower seed kernels	1/4 cup	3.9
Chia seeds	1 tablespoon	3.5
Almonds	1 ounce (23 nuts)	3.5
Pistachio nuts	1 ounce (49 nuts)	2.9
<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Serving size</b>	<b>Total fiber (grams)</b>
Artichoke, cooked	1 medium	10.3
Peas, cooked	1 cup	8.8
Broccoli, boiled	1 cup	5.1
Turnip greens, boiled	1 cup	5.0
Sweet corn, cooked	1 cup	4.2
Brussels sprouts, cooked	1 cup	4.1
Potato, with skin, baked	1 medium	2.9
Tomato paste	1/4 cup	2.7

**Interactions with medications and other considerations:** A fiber supplement can interfere with the absorption of some medications. As with any supplement, talk to your physician and/or Registered Dietitian before starting a fiber supplement. Some people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) find that sugar-free fiber supplements with sugar alcohols (sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, isomalt) worsen their symptoms.

<b>Sample Menu for a High Fiber Diet</b>		
Breakfast	1 cup Raisin Bran with milk, banana, slice of whole wheat toast and jam	13 grams
Snack	½ cup trail mix	4 grams
Lunch	2 corn tortillas topped with ¼ cup refried beans, lettuce, cheese, and salsa	7 grams
Snack	1 medium apple	4 grams
Dinner	Chicken with ¾ cup brown rice and ½ cup broccoli	4 grams