

## **High Fiber Diet**

Most Americans and Europeans eat only about 15 to 20 grams of dietary fiber each day. Evidence now indicates that most of us should double our intake of fiber. Because our westernized diet is made up of so many highly processed and low fiber foods, it takes a concerned effort in order to get into a high fiber dietary habit.

Fiber is essentially normal for intestinal function. It is important to start slowly and gradually increase fiber foods from approximately 10 grams of dietary fiber until the tolerated or maximal level (approximately 40 to 50 grams is reached). The list on the following page gives the total amount of fiber in some common foods.

### **Tips for adding fiber to your meals**

- Add frozen vegetables to a can of soup or put canned beans or lentils on a salad
- Replace at least half of the meat in chili, stews, and casseroles with canned or cooked beans
- Include a salad with lunch or dinner. Choose leafy, dark green lettuce or fresh spinach
- Add fresh cut up vegetables to lunches, or eat them as snacks
- Use brown or wild rice in place of white rice. Add beans or lentils for more fiber
- Cut up whole fruit and add it to cereal at breakfast or top frozen yogurt for dessert
- Eat smooth-skinned fruits, such as pears, apples, and nectarines with the skin on
- Choose oatmeal or high fiber cold cereals, such as all-bran, shredded wheat, or corn flakes cereal. Add 1 tablespoon of oat bran or wheat germ

of nuts. You might try cereal as a snack

### **How do I add fiber to my diet?**

Most people need to eat about twice as much fiber as they do, but adding fiber to your diet too quickly can cause gas, bloating, or diarrhea. To prevent this:

1. Add high-fiber foods to your diet slowly over several weeks.
2. Increase the amount of water you drink as you increase the fiber you eat. Drink at least one glass of water with each meal and a total of 8 glasses a day.

### **Where can I find Fiber?**

A healthy diet includes 20-35 grams of fiber a day. This may sound like a lot, but you can meet the goal by eating a variety of foods each day. Best source of fiber:

-whole grain breads and cereals, fresh whole fruits and dried fruits, raw or lightly steamed vegetables, canned or dried beans, peas, or lentils, nuts and seeds

Scientific research has recently focused much attention on dietary fiber and its role in nutrition and health. Today, many researchers agree that dietary fiber has important benefits, particularly through its effects on the digestive system. A high fiber diet helps relieve constipation, a health concern of modern societies. As testimony to this concern, annual sales of laxatives and similar products totaled nearly \$400 million.

Both types of fiber play important roles in the digestive tract. Insoluble fiber draws water from the system and increases the bulk and softness of the food mass. This decreases the time it takes to travel through the digestive system, making elimination easier. Soluble fiber seems to delay digestion and absorption of nutrients that modify the action of digestive enzymes and hormones.

Fiber can also be useful in weight reduction programs. Both types of fiber may create a feeling of fullness in the digestive tract without contributing a lot of calories. It is important to eat a variety of high fiber foods to receive the benefits of both insoluble and soluble fiber.

### **Dietary fiber and chronic disease**

Some scientists believe that high fiber, low fat diet may reduce the risk and aid in the treatment of certain chronic diseases such as diverticular disease, colon cancer, and coronary heart disease.

### **Diverticular Disease**

Diverticular disease is characterized by protrusions or out-pouching in the wall of the colon. These pouches, or diverticula, are believed to develop from excessive pressure, which weakens the wall of the colon. As much as 1/3 of the U.S. adult population has diverticula. In many cases, there are no obvious symptoms, but in some people, the diverticula become inflamed and painful. High fiber foods may help in the prevention and treatment of diverticular disease, particularly wheat bran and some fruits and vegetables.

### **Colon Cancer**

Many scientists believe that a high fiber diet may reduce the risk of colon cancer in several ways. First, fiber absorbs water, lowering the concentration of potential carcinogenic (cancer causing) substances in the bowel contents. Second, since insoluble fiber speeds up the movement of waste material, the colon is exposed to any carcinogenic substance a shorter length of time. Finally, diets high in fiber are typically lower in fat and may help protect colon cancer by reducing the fat intake.



Food	Fiber (Grams)	Serving
<b>VEGETABLES</b>		
Beans	2	1/2 cup
Broccoli	2.2	1/2 cup
Brussel Sprouts	2.3	1/2 cup
Carrots	2	1/2 cup
Celery	1	1/2 cup
Corn	4	1/2 cup
Corn on the cob	5.9	1 ear
Lettuce	1	1 cup
Peas (canned)	4	1/2 cup
Peas (dried)	7.9	1/2 cup
Spinach	4	1 cup
<b>LEGUMES</b>		
Beans (lima, kidney, baked)	10	1/2 cup
Refried beans	12	1 cup
Lentils	8	1 cup
Peas (canned)	4	1/2 cup
Peas (dried)	7.9	1/2 cup
<b>Fruit</b>		
Apple with peel	3.5	1 medium
Apple Juice	0	
Banana	2.4	1 medium
Grapefruit (Fresh)	0.6	1/2 medium
Orange (Fresh)	2	1 medium
Peach (Fresh)	2	1 medium
Strawberries	3	1 cup
Kiwi	5	1 medium
Pear	4.5	1 medium
<b>CEREAL</b>		
Fiber One	14	1 cup
100% Bran	13.5	1 cup
All-Bran Extra Fiber	13	1 cup
Raisin Bran	3.5	1 cup
<b>GRAINS/BREADS</b>		
Rice	0.8	1/2 cup
Whole wheat bread	1.3	1 slice
White, Rye, French Bread	0.7	1 slice