

# Nutritional News



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## Fiber

Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes and refers to the carbohydrates that cannot be digested. It was brought to the nutrition forefront in the 1970's by the work of Dr. Denis Burkitt, who discovered that diseases such as heart attacks, high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes were less common in Africa as compared to Western cultures. He noted that the primary dietary difference was the high intake of fiber and low intake of refined carbohydrates.

While fiber falls under the category of carbohydrates, in comparison, it does not provide the same number of calories, nor is it processed the way that other sources of carbohydrates are. Soluble fiber dissolves in water to form a gel-like substance. Sources of soluble fiber are oats, legumes, apples, berries, barely and some vegetables. Insoluble fiber increases the movement of material through your digestive tract and increases your stool bulk. Sources of insoluble fiber are whole wheat foods, bran, nuts, seeds and the skin of the some fruits and vegetables. Monitoring the different forms of fiber is not as important as the total amount of fiber in your diet.

Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation – Daily Fiber intake recommendations:

- 19g – ages 1 to 3 years
- 25g – ages 4 to 8 years
- 26 – 31g – ages 9 to 13 years
- 26 – 38g – ages 14 to 19 years
- 25 – 38g – ages 19 to 50 years
- 21 – 30g – age 50+

\*lower range for females; higher range for males

There is some evidence that supports the theory that fiber helps **control weight** because the gel-like substance that soluble fibers form when they dissolve in water causes things to swell and move slower in the intestines. This increase in time, which foods stay in the intestines, has been shown to reduce hunger feelings and overall food intake.

Consuming foods high in fiber also keeps our blood sugars stable, which helps prevent **type2 diabetes**. Soluble fiber has been found to produce significant reductions in blood sugar in 33 of 50 studies testing it. Controlling cholesterol levels protects against **heart disease**. Studies have also shown that 5 to 10 grams of soluble fiber per day decreases LDL cholesterol by about 5%. Soluble fiber reduces the absorption of cholesterol in your intestines by binding with the bile (which contains cholesterol) and dietary cholesterol so that the body excretes it.

### High sources of fiber:

- 15g – 1 cup black beans, lentils or split peas
- 10g – 1 medium artichoke
- 5.3g – ¼ cup Bran Flakes
- 8g – 1 cup raspberries
- 5.5g – Pear with skin

As you increase fiber in your diet, you may experience more intestinal gas. Increase slowly in order to allow your body to adapt. It is important to increase the amount of water you consume while increasing fiber because some fibers absorb water. If you do not consume enough fluid, you may end up with the problem that you are trying to avoid: constipation. Start by figuring out how much fiber you are currently eating daily and begin to slowly increase the amount from there. Increasing too quickly can lead to gas, bloating and diarrhea.

Keep in mind that "more" is not always better so ensure you're not eating more fiber than your body can comfortably handle. There is no Tolerable Upper Intake Level (UL) set for fiber, which means that there is no cap on how high you can go before it causes any damage. Pay attention to how your bowel movements are responding and speak with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

### Resources

Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation  
Harvard Health Publications  
Medicine Net

## Fun Food Facts!



The "Father of Medicine", Hippocrates (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) was one of the first physicians to argue for the benefits of fiber in the form bran to help keep the large intestine healthy.

## Did You Know?



Unless you are seeking a specific health benefit, it is not as important to know what kind of fiber you are taking in, as it is the total daily amount

### Tips on how to add fiber to your diet:

- ✓ Add flax seeds to your salads, soups, cereals or yogurt
- ✓ Freeze berries and add them to your cereal, dessert, shakes or yogurt
- ✓ Pre-cut and store veggies in baggies so their ready to take when you're on-the-go
- ✓ Add beans and peas to your salads and soups
- ✓ Choose whole grain products over "white"

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