

High Fiber Diet

What is fiber?

Fiber is part of food that is resistant to digestion and absorption. Fiber helps prevent constipation by providing bulk in the diet and may be helpful in preventing many gastrointestinal conditions.

Why is fiber important to include in your diet?

Fiber can absorb up to 30 times its own weight in water. The body doesn't actually absorb fiber. It adds bulk and texture to the stool as it passes through the body, keeping your system regular. Because of this we recommend fiber for the treatment or prevention of many digestive tract problems, including hemorrhoids, diverticular disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and cancer. Fiber keeps your stools from becoming either too loose, or dry and hard. If you suffer from diarrhea, fiber may "slow you down." If you have difficulty with constipation, fiber may "speed you up." It may actually "normalize" bowel activity.

What are good sources of fiber?

Dietary:

- Whole grains and breads
- Beans and peas
- Nuts and seeds
- Vegetables and fruits, especially those with skins and seeds

Additives:

Psyllium, Methylcellulose, or Polycarbophil (as in Benefiber, Citrucel, Fibercon, Hydrocil, Konsyl, Metamucil)

How should fiber be added to the diet?

Add fiber to your diet slowly to prevent feeling "bloated" and "gassy".

Choose the following more often:

- Whole grains breakfast cereals - see next page
- Whole wheat bread and other products made with whole wheat flour, such as whole grain crackers and whole grain pasta
- A variety of vegetables, such as carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, cabbage, potatoes, celery, green beans, yams, squash and greens
- Beans and split peas
- Nuts, seeds and popcorn
- A variety of fruit, such as apples, bananas, grapefruit, oranges, peaches, pineapple and plums
- Unfiltered fruit and vegetable juices
- Whole wheat bread and other products made with whole wheat flour, such as whole grain crackers and whole grain pasta

Breakfast

Citrus Fruit or Juice - ½ cup
 High fiber Cereal -½ - 1 cup
 Whole Grain Toast - 1 Slice
 Butter or Margarine - 1 teaspoon
 Milk - 1 cup

Lunch

Soup
 Meat or Meat Substitute
 Vegetables -1-2 servings
 Raw Vegetables salad
 Whole Grain Bread - 1-2- slices
 Fruit - ½ cup
 Milk - 1 cup

Dinner

Meat, Poultry or Fish
 Potato or brown rice- ½ cup
 Vegetable- 2 serving
 Salad
 Fresh Fruit- ½ cup
 Beverage

High Fiber Cereal: a great way to start – look at the following fiber content and compare with Cheerios – 1 cup = 2 grams fiber. Fiber One ½ cup = 14 grams; Kellogg’s 100% Bran ½ cup = 13 grams; Kashi 1 cup = 12 grams; Post 100% Bran 1/3 cup = 9 grams; Post Raisin Bran 1 cup = 8 grams. Oatmeal 1 cup = 8 grams.

If you are lactose intolerant and cannot drink milk, try “rice milk”, soymilk, or lactaid pills.

Vegetables:	Portion	Grams Fiber	Fruit:	Portion	Grams Fiber
Beans (kidney)	½ cup	5.5	Apple	Small	2.8
Beans (lima)	½ cup	4.4	Banana	Medium	2.0
Bread-wheat	Slice	2.0	Orange	Small	3.0
Broccoli	¾ cup	5.0	Peach	Medium	2.0
Carrots (raw)	4 sticks	1.7	Watermelon	Thin slice	2.8
Green Beans	½ cup	2.1			
Green Peas	½ cup	3.0	Note that vegetables have more fiber and usually produce less gas since fruit has fructose sugar in it. Taking Beano capsules until the body is used to them may reduce gas from vegetables.		
Corn	Small	3.0			
Potato	Small	4.2			
Rice (brown)	½ cup	5.5			

Fiber supplements: one dose of powder forms of supplements supply 3-5 grams of fiber. Six pills supply 2.4 grams of fiber. There are 3 basic types:

- Psyllium such as Metamucil is a plant material works by breaking down in the gut and becoming a food source for the “good bacteria” there. Psyllium does contain calories and may cause gas.
- Methylcellulose such as Citrucel is a fiber that is non-allergenic, non-fermentable and is created from the cell wall of plants.
- Polycarbophil such as Fibercon is created from plants and is not absorbed by the body. It absorbs water in the intestinal tract and creates a bulkier and softer stool. Polycarbophil is less likely to cause bloating. All three can be used long term.

There is no question that adequate fiber is necessary for good health. Consumption of 20 to 40 grams of fiber per day is possible from food sources alone. However, it is recognized that in the U.S. the average fiber intake is less than 15 grams per day. In light of average intake, fiber supplements are often recommended.