

FIBER FACTS

NEW-LIFESTYLES STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOUSM

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As Americans, most of us do not consume a fiber-rich diet. Despite talk of fiber's many health benefits, the popular foods Americans crave contain little dietary fiber. It's time to change our eating habits -- and if we take small steps to change, we just may learn to love fiber-rich foods!

1. What are the benefits of a high-fiber diet?

There are two types of fiber: insoluble and soluble. Insoluble fiber, found in whole grains, cereals and breads, promotes regularity and may lower the risk of colon and rectal cancer.

Soluble fiber, found in beans, peas, barley, apples and oats, can lower blood cholesterol, help to normalize blood glucose and insulin levels and prevent heart disease.

Foods rich in fiber are frequently lower in fat and added sugars than other foods, making them also lower in calories. Because the body processes fiber more slowly, fiber-rich foods give you the feeling of fullness with fewer calories.

2. How much fiber is recommended?

The desirable fiber intake is 20-35 grams/day for healthy adults and their age plus 5 grams/day for children.

3. Where can I find dietary fiber?

It is better to get fiber from food than from fiber supplements because along with the fiber content in food comes other important nutrients you need for good health. You'll only find dietary fiber in plant foods; meat and animal foods do not contain dietary fiber.

Most of us are guilty of not getting enough dietary fiber, as we do not consume the recommended amount of fruits, vegetables, whole and high-fiber grain products and legumes essential for good health.



When looking for high fiber content, remember this simple rule: generally speaking, less processing equals more fiber. This means that you get more fiber from eating an apple with peel than you do from drinking apple juice.



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4. What are some good sources of fiber and how much fiber do they contain?

- ½ cup 100% bran cereal: 10-18 grams
- ½ cup dried beans: 5-8 grams
- ¾ cup bran flake cereal: 4-6 grams
- ½ cup cooked corn: 4 grams
- 3 cups air-popped popcorn: 4 grams
- ½ cup cooked broccoli: 3 grams
- 1 cup red raspberries: 5 grams
- 1 small apple: 3 grams

Choose whole-grain and bran food products. Breakfast is a great opportunity to start your day with fiber! There are a large variety of high-fiber cereals available. Look for one with more than 3 grams of dietary fiber per serving. Make sure to choose one that you enjoy so that you'll continue to eat it – high-fiber cereal won't do you any good if it sits in the pantry!

Be open to fiber-full alternatives!

Here are some simple ways to substitute fiber-rich foods for foods low in fiber:

Instead of:

- Mashed potato
- Regular pasta
- White bread
- Instant or white rice
- Canned fruit or juice
- Canned vegetables
- Potato chips
- Cream of tomato soup
- Low fiber cereal
- Sugar cookies
- White flour
- Chocolate chips

Try:

- Baked potato with skin
- Whole-wheat pasta
- Whole-grain bread
- Brown rice
- Fresh fruit with skins
- Fresh vegetables
- Popcorn
- Lentil or split pea soup
- Bran cereal
- Oatmeal raisin cookies
- Whole wheat flour
- Raisins or nuts

Make one small change per meal – try whole wheat pasta and see if your family can even tell the difference in taste!

5. I want to eat more fiber but don't want the increased gastrointestinal discomfort and embarrassing gas that goes along with a high-fiber diet. Is there any way to minimize these side-effects?

It is true that high-fiber diets can cause gas and discomfort; however, this is usually a problem when a person shocks their system by going from a low-fiber diet to eating a high-fiber diet all in one day. When increasing your fiber intake, do so slowly by adding a few foods a day until you reach the recommended 20-35 grams of fiber.

As we all know, beans are notorious for causing gas – but they are good for us too! Here are some tips for reducing the gas-inducing effects of beans: soak dry beans at least eight hours, changing the water to rinse them several times, before cooking them. For canned beans, drain off the liquid in the can and rinse the beans well under water before cooking them.



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