

What You Need to Know About Fiber



What is Fiber?

Fiber is also known as roughage or bulk. We get fiber from whole grains, fruits, legumes (peas and dried beans, such as pinto and black beans) and vegetables. High fiber diets provide bulk, are more filling and have been linked to lower body weights. According to the American Dietetic Association, many chronic diseases, such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, as well as diverticulosis and constipation, can be prevented or treated by increasing the amounts and varieties of fiber containing foods. This makes fiber an important part of our diets.

How Much Fiber Do We Need?

Dietary Reference Intakes for adults:

- ◆ 25 grams of dietary fiber a day for women
- ◆ 38 grams of dietary fiber a day for men.

What Are Good Sources of Fiber?

Whole Grain Breads and Cereal

- ◆ wheat and bran cereals
- ◆ whole wheat breads and crackers
- ◆ oatmeal, whole grain pasta, bulgur, whole grain rice, rye, and buckwheat

Fresh Fruits

- ◆ whole fruit (including skins) such as pears, plums, and grapes
- ◆ fruits with edible seeds, such as strawberries and those with pulp such as oranges and grapefruit

Vegetables

- ◆ lentils, split peas and black, red and pinto beans

How Do I Add Fiber to My Diet?

- ◆ First check with your doctor to determine whether or not you have colon or bowel disease.
- ◆ Begin increasing your fiber intake **gradually**. Too much fiber at one time may cause discomforts such as excessive gas and diarrhea.
- ◆ Use a variety of sources of fiber instead of just one. (such as bran)
- ◆ Remember to always increase fluid intake (water) and exercise (such as a daily walk) for prevention and relief of constipation.
- ◆ Make sure to read labels on breads to make sure they are whole grain breads. Some types of bread are brown and dark but not whole grain.

How Much Fiber Is In Our Food?

Food	Serving Size	Total Dietary Fiber (grams per serving)
Fruits		
Pear with skin	1 pear	5.1
Figs, dried	2	3.7
Mango, raw	1	3.7
Apple with skin	1 apple	3.3
Strawberries, raw	1 (8 ounce) cup	3.3
Orange	1 orange	3.1
Banana	1 banana	3.1
Prunes, dried	5 prunes	3.0
Papaya, raw	1 cup	2.5
Peaches, canned	1 half	1.3
Raisins, seedless	1 miniature box (14 g)	.5
Vegetables		
Lentils, cooked	½ cup	7.8
Pinto beans, cooked	½ cup	7.7
Black beans, cooked	½ cup	7.5
Broccoli, frozen (cooked)	1 cup	5.1
Turnip greens, cooked	1 cup	5
Sweet potato, baked in skin	1	4.8
Potato baked, with skin	1	4.6
Spinach, cooked	1 cup	4.3
Corn, canned	1 cup	4.2
Blackeye peas, cooked	½ cup	canned: 4.0 cooked from scratch: 5.6
Green peas, canned	½ cup	3.5
Carrots, raw	1 cup	3.1
Mustard greens, cooked	1 cup	2.8
Tomato, fresh	average size	1.5
Cantaloupe	1 cup	1.4
Celery, raw	1 stalk	0.6
Grains		
Bran Cereal	½ cup	8.8
Shredded wheat	2 biscuits	5.5
Wheat bran flakes	¾ cup	5.1
Raisin bran cereal	1 cup	5- 6.8
Oatmeal, cooked	1 cup	4.0
Rice, brown, cooked	1 cup	3.5
Bread, whole wheat	1 slice	1.9
Crackers, whole wheat	4 crackers	1.7
Tortilla, corn	1	1.6
Tortilla, flour	1	1.0
Bread, white wheat	1 slice	0.6
Rice, white, cooked	1 cup	.6
Graham crackers	2 squares	0.4
Grits	½ cup	0.04
Source: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 20		