

THE FACTS ABOUT FIBER

What is fiber?

Fiber is a complex carbohydrate found only in plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables and grains. It is generally defined as the part of the plant material that cannot be digested and absorbed into the blood stream.

Not all fibers are alike

There are two types of dietary fiber- soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber is found in all types of peas, beans and lentils as well as oats, barley, and some fruits and vegetables.

Insoluble fiber is found in whole grains and many vegetables. Wheat bran is also an excellent source. Most foods contain mixtures of soluble and insoluble fibers. When you add fiber-rich foods to your diet, you will usually get the benefits from both types of fiber.

How fiber affects your health

Soluble fiber can help you in two ways. If you have diabetes, eating foods containing soluble fiber can help control the level of sugar in your blood. Soluble fiber can also help lower the level of cholesterol in your blood. However, foods with soluble fiber only help when they are part of a healthful lifestyle and an eating plan that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Insoluble fiber helps hold water in the colon and can help prevent constipation. A diet that is high in insoluble fiber also helps prevent two intestinal disorders- diverticulosis and hemorrhoids. In addition, some doctors believe that eating plenty of fiber over the years may help prevent certain cancers, such as colon cancer.

How much fiber should you eat?

Most health professionals recommend eating 20-35 grams of fiber a day to get the health benefits. To get an idea of the exact fiber content of various foods, see the table on the following page that shows foods and the amount of dietary fiber they contain. A sample meal plan is also included. It is not necessary to eat huge amounts of plant foods to meet your fiber goal.

Can you get too much fiber?

If you want to add fiber to your diet, gradually increase the amount you eat. Your stomach and intestines need time to get used to this change. Adding fiber too quickly or using too much fiber on a regular basis can cause gas, diarrhea, and bloating. Be sure to drink plenty of water and other liquids as well. Aim for at least 8 glasses of liquids a day. Eating more than 50 or 60 grams of fiber a day may decrease the amount of vitamins and minerals your body absorbs. Most often, this happens when people add wheat bran to many foods or by consuming a very-high fiber breakfast cereal in addition to large servings of high fiber foods.

Putting it all together

Check the table for high fiber foods that you like. Then:

- Choose whole fruits instead of juice.
- Try a baked potato with the skin.
- Eat high fiber snacks like popcorn, fresh fruits and vegetables and nuts (be careful because nuts can have a lot of calories).
- Include *both* a cooked vegetable and a salad at dinner.
- Start your day with a high fiber cereal for breakfast.

Fiber Content of Selected Foods

serving size	Breads, Grains & Pasta	grams of dietary fiber
1 cup	Whole Wheat Pasta, cooked	6.3
1	Whole wheat pita bread	4.7
1	Whole wheat English muffin	4.4
1 slice	High fiber wheat bread	3.4
2	Rye Krisp crackers	3.3
½ cup	Barley, cooked	3
1 medium	Bran muffin	3
1	Oat bran muffin	2.6
2 cups	Popcorn	2.4

serving size	Vegetables	grams of dietary fiber
½ cup	Peas, frozen cooked	4.4
1 medium	Baked potato, with skin	4
½ cup	Mixed vegetables, frozen cooked	4
½ cup	Brussels sprouts, cooked	3.4
½ cup	Broccoli, tops cooked	3
1 cup	Spinach, raw	2.8
1 medium	Carrot, raw	2.3
½ med.	Avocado, fresh	2
½ cup	Green beans, cooked	2

1 slice	Whole wheat bread	2
1 slice	Pumpernickel bread	2
1 slice	Rye bread	1.9
½ cup	Brown Rice, cooked	1.8
1 slice	Mixed grain bread	1.7
3	Fig Newton's cookies	1.5
½ cup	Wild Rice, cooked	1.5
1 slice	Cracked wheat bread	1.4
Breakfast Cereals		
1 ounce	General Mills Fiber One	12
1 ounce	Kellogg's All-bran	9
¾ cup	Kellogg's Cracklin' Oat bran	6
¼ cup	Wheat bran, crude	6
1/2 cup	Ralston's Wheat Hot Cereal	5
2 biscuits	Nabisco Shredded Wheat	4.6
1 ounce	Kellogg's Bran Flakes	4
1 ounce	Nabisco Shredded Wheat 'n Bran	4
¾ cup	Healthy Choice Raisin Almond	3.8
1 ounce	Kellogg's Raisin Bran	3.8
¼ cup	Wheat germ	3.8
¼ cup	Oat bran, raw	3.6
¾ cup	Healthy Choice Granola with Raisins	3.4
1 ounce	General Mills Multi-Bran Chex	3.4
1 ounce	General Mills Total	2.8
1 ounce	General Mills Wheaties	2.8
1 ounce	General Mills Raisin Nut Bran	2.6
1 ounce	Post Fruit & Fibre	2.6
1 ounce	Post Grape-Nuts	2.4
1 ounce	General Mills Cheerios	2
1 ounce	Kellogg's Low Fat Granola	1.7
¾ cup	Oatmeal, cooked	1.6
Legumes (cooked)		
½ cup	Baked Beans	9.8
½ cup	Kidney Beans	7.3
½ cup	Navy Beans	5
½ cup	Pinto Beans	5
½ cup	Lentils	3.7

½ cup	Eggplant, cooked	2
½ med.	Sweet potato, cooked	2
½ cup	Cabbage, raw	2
1 medium	Tomato, fresh	1.6
½ cup	Corn, cooked	1.5
1-1/2 cup	Lettuce, raw	1.5
½ cup	Cauliflower, raw	1.3
1 cup	Romaine lettuce, shredded	1
Fruits		
1 medium	Pear, with skin	4
½ cup	Apricots, dried	3.9
2	Figs, dried	3.5
1 cup	Strawberries	3.3
1 medium	Orange, peeled	3.1
1 medium	Apple, with skin	3
5	Dates, dried	3
1 medium	Nectarine, with skin	3
1 medium	Apple, with skin	3
¼ cup	Raisins	2
½ cup	Blueberries	2
1 medium	Peach, with skin	2
3	Prunes, dried	1.8
¼	Cantaloupe	1.8
1 cup	Grapes, green	1.6
10 large	Cherries	1.3
Nuts & Seeds		
¼ cup	Almonds	5
2 Tbsp.	Peanut butter, chunky	1.5
¼ cup	Sunflower seeds, oil-roasted	2.3
¼ cup	Peanuts, dry-roasted	2.9
1.4 cup	Walnuts, English	1.4
2 Tbsp	Tahini	2.6
¼ cup	Pistachio nuts, dry-roasted	3.5
2 Tbsp	Miso	1.9

Test Results and Advice Nurse

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

Appointments

Appointments can be made in person or by phone. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments, call: 863-0774

For more information about health care issues, visit the UHS Web site at www.sa.psu.edu/uhs

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