



Fiber

What is it?

Fiber is the non-digestible portion of plant foods. Soluble fiber aids in bulking and moving food through the gut and forms a gel when mixed with liquid. Insoluble fiber does not mix with liquids and passes through the GI tract mostly intact. Both are key in a healthy diet and in maintaining regularity of the digestive tract.

Health benefits of fiber

- ◆ Helps maintain regular bowel movements
- ◆ Lowers blood cholesterol levels
- ◆ Provides a feeling of “fullness,” and may help one achieve weight loss
- ◆ Fiber in grain products is found in the bran, or outer coating of the grain. Whole grains contain important vitamins, minerals, and other phytochemicals and nutrients that are beneficial for overall health.

How much do I need?

The American Dietetic Association (ADA) recommends 25-30 grams per day for adults. Increasing the fiber in your diet gradually may help minimize bloating and discomfort. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids as you increase your fiber intake.

Dietary fiber sources

Choose more whole grains, high fiber cereals, dried beans and legumes, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables. For example ½ cup of legumes has 8 grams of fiber. This is ¼ of your daily need.

How do I choose a fiber supplement?

Type of Fiber:

The most common type of fiber supplement is psyllium, a soluble plant fiber found in Metamucil® and Konsyl®. Other brands, such as Citrucel®, contain methylcellulose, or wheat dextrin (such as Benefiber®). Fibercon® contains a synthetic fiber called calcium polycarbophil.

Flavorings and Mixing:

Many of the powdered brands have added flavoring and are mixed with just water. Other varieties are “clear” and can be added to numerous beverages and food items. Some brands also offer a “wafer” form.

Interactions with medications, and other considerations:

A fiber supplement can interfere with the absorption of some medications. As with most supplements, talk to your physician and/or dietitian before starting a fiber supplement. Some individuals with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) find that sugar-free fiber supplements containing sugar alcohols (sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, isomalt) worsen their symptoms.

Good sources of dietary fiber

Fruits	Serving size	Total fiber (grams)
Raspberries	1 cup	8.0
Pear, with skin	1 medium	5.5
Apple, with skin	1 medium	4.4
Strawberries (halves)	1 1/4 cup	3.8
Banana	1 medium	3.1
Orange	1 medium	3.1
Figs, dried	2 medium	1.6
Grains, cereal and pasta	Serving size	Total fiber (grams)
Spaghetti, whole-wheat, cooked	1 cup	6.2
Barley, pearled, cooked	1 cup	6.0
Bran flakes	3/4 cup	5.3
Oat bran muffin	1 medium	5.2
Oatmeal, quick, regular or instant, cooked	1 cup	4.0
Popcorn, air-popped	3 cups	3.5
Brown rice, cooked	1 cup	3.5
Bread, rye	1 slice	1.9
Bread, whole-wheat or multigrain	1 slice	1.9
Legumes, nuts and seeds	Serving size	Total fiber (grams)
Split peas, cooked	1 cup	16.3
Lentils, cooked	1 cup	15.6
Black beans, cooked	1 cup	15.0
Lima beans, cooked	1 cup	13.2
Baked beans, vegetarian, canned, cooked	1 cup	10.4
Sunflower seed kernels	1/4 cup	3.9
Almonds	1 ounce (23 nuts)	3.5
Pistachio nuts	1 ounce (49 nuts)	2.9
Vegetables	Serving size	Total fiber (grams)
Artichoke, cooked	1 medium	10.3
Peas, cooked	1 cup	8.8
Broccoli, boiled	1 cup	5.1
Turnip greens, boiled	1 cup	5.0
Sweet corn, cooked	1 cup	4.2
Brussels sprouts, cooked	1 cup	4.1
Potato, with skin, baked	1 medium	2.9
Tomato paste	1/4 cup	2.7

Sample high fiber diet (30 grams)	Grams of fiber
Breakfast	
3/4 cup raisin bran and milk	6 grams
Banana, plus slice of whole wheat toast and jam	4 grams
Snack	
1/2 cup trail mix	4 grams
Lunch	
2 corn tortillas topped with 1/4 cup refried beans, lettuce, cheese and salsa	6 grams
3/4 cup brown rice and fresh peach	5 grams
Snack	
Granola bar	2-3 grams
Dinner	
Chicken with 3/4 cup brown rice and 1/2 cup broccoli	4 grams