



Fiber in Your Diet

What is fiber and where is it found?

Dietary fiber is the material that remains after plant foods pass through the intestinal tract. It is not a single substance but is a complex mixture of substances. Total dietary fiber is made up of two types of fiber, soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber dissolves in water and insoluble fiber (sometimes referred to as bulking fiber) does not dissolve in water. These types of fiber have different roles in the body.

Fiber is found only in plant foods and is present in most foods containing complex carbohydrates, such as whole grain cereals and breads, fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

Why is fiber important in my diet?

Fiber has important benefits for health, particularly through its effect on the digestive system. It is important to include both types of fiber in your diet.

Soluble fiber

Soluble fiber is important in the digestion and absorption of food and may help lower blood cholesterol levels when combined with a low fat diet. It has also shown promising effects to help control blood glucose levels. Good sources include whole grain foods made from oats and barley, oat bran, citrus fruits, dried beans and other legumes.

Insoluble fiber

Insoluble fiber is important because it helps satisfy the appetite and promotes regularity. It may also help protect against cancer by diluting cancer causing substances found in the large intestine and stool. Good sources include vegetables, whole grain foods made from wheat, corn and rice, dried beans and peas, and nuts.

How much fiber should I eat?

Individuals should have a total dietary fiber intake of 20 to 35 grams per day. Eat five or more servings of vegetables/fruits, especially greens and yellow vegetables and citrus fruits, and six or more servings of breads, cereals and legumes daily.

How can I change my diet to increase fiber?

Learning to eat a healthful diet with more fiber is easier than you think. Start by adding an additional five grams of dietary fiber each day, slowly building up to the recommended level of 35 grams. Simultaneously, you should be drinking more water and other fluids, at least 8-12 cups daily. When you first add additional fiber to your diet, you may experience intestinal gas. This is normal and will soon subside. The gradual increase of fiber gives your body time to adapt to the change in your diet and promotes regular digestion. You will also notice that when you are up to 30-35 grams of fiber daily, you will have several loosely formed stools per day.

Here are some easy ways to increase your fiber intake:

- Start your day off with a breakfast cereal that contains fiber. Look for one that provides 5 grams of fiber per serving.
- Use the food label to choose breads and grain products that contain fiber.
- Carry fiber rich foods such as fruits and vegetables as snacks.

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Fiber Content of Selected Foods

<u>Food Group</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Dietary Fiber Grams</u>	<u>Food Group</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Dietary Fiber Grams</u>
FRUITS:			BREADS:		
Apple, raw, whole	1 small	2.0	Buckwheat pancakes	2-4" diameter	2.0
Applesauce	1/3 cup	1.9	Bran muffin	1 muffin	3.5
Apricots, dried, raw	4 lg halves	4.4	Cracked wheat	1 slice	2.0
Avocado	1/2 medium	2.0	Doughnut, cake	1	0.2
Banana	1 small	2.0	White bread	1 slice	0.8
Berries	1/2 cup	3.2 to 7.3	Whole meal bread	1 slice	3.3
Cherries	10 large	2.0	Whole wheat bread	1 slice	2.6
Currents, red, raw	1/4 cup	2.7	Rye, pumpernickel	1 slice	
Dates, dried	2 medium	1.5			
Figs, stewed with sugar	3 small	9.7	CEREALS:		
Orange	1 small	2.0	All Bran	1/2 cup	8.0
Peach	1 medium	2.3	Barley, boiled	1/2 cup	2.2
Pear	1/2 small	2.0	Cornflakes	1 cup	3.0
Plums	2 small	2.0	Cornmeal	1/2 cup	0.5
Prunes, dried	5 medium	13.4	Farina, cooked	1/2 cup	0.5
Strawberries	1/2 cup	2.0	Grape Nuts	3 Tbsp.	2.1
			Muffets, Shredded Wheat	1 oz.	3.7
VEGETABLES:			Oatmeal, cooked	1/2 cup	1.5
Asparagus, tips only	1/2 cup	1.5	Oatmeal, dry	3 Tbsp.	2.0
Beans, baked	2 Tbsp.	2.0	Puffed Wheat	1 cup	1.8
Beans, snap, wax	2/3 cup	3.4	Rice Krispies	1 cup	1.3
Beets (2" diameter)	2 whole	2.5	Raisin Bran	3/4 cup	3.5
Broccoli, cooked	2/3 cup	4.1	Special K	1 1/2 cup	1.7
Brussels sprouts	2/3 cup	2.9			
Cabbage, raw	1 cup	3.1	CEREAL PRODUCTS & FLOURS:		
Carrots, raw	1 large	2.9	Miller's Bran	2 Tbsp.	12.0
Carrots, cooked	1/3 cup	2.0	Rice bran	2 Tbsp.	12.0
Cauliflower	7/8 cup	1.8	Wheat bran	2 Tbsp.	12.0
Celery	1 cup	2.0	White flour	2 Tbsp.	1.0
Corn on the cob	2 inches	2.0	Whole wheat flour	2 Tbsp.	3.2
Eggplant	1/2 cup	2.5			
Leeks, cooked (5" long)	3-4	3.9	CRACKERS:		
Lentils, cooked	2/3 cup	3.7	Rye Krisp	6 crackers	4.0
Lettuce	2 cups	2.0			
Mushrooms, raw	10 small/4 lg	2.5	RICE AND PASTA:		
Mustard greens, cooked	1/2 cup	3.7	White rice, cooked	1 cup	1.0
Okra	8-9 pods	3.2	Brown rice, cooked	1 cup	2.0
Onions, raw (2 1/4" diameter)	1	1.3	Spaghetti, cooked	1 cup	0.5
Parsnips, cooked	1/2 cup	2.5			
Peas, green	1/2 cup	5.2	MISCELLANEOUS:		
Peas, split, dried (cooked)	1/2 cup	1.5	Peanuts, roasted with skin	20 nuts	2.0
Potato, white (baked, flesh only)(2" diam)	1 small	2.0	Peanut butter	1 1/2 Tbsp	1.0
Squash, summer, cooked	1/2 cup	2.1	Pickle	1 large	1.0
Squash, winter, baked	1/2 cup	6.3	Strawberry jam	5 Tbsp.	1.0
Spinach, cooked	1/2 cup	6.3	Sunflower seeds	2 oz.	8.1
Tomato, raw	1 medium	2.0	Filberts	1 nut	1.0
Tomato, canned	1 cup	1.8	Brazil nuts	16 nuts	4.6
			Walnuts	40 halves	4.2