

Fiber

What Does Fiber Do?

Fiber contributes to good health in many ways.

- It keeps food moving smoothly and regularly through your body.
- It helps prevent heart disease by lowering blood cholesterol levels.
- It may lower the risk of developing certain cancers.
- It helps to control blood glucose levels in diabetes.
- A high-fiber diet tends to make you feel fuller sooner so you eat less. This can help with weight control.

How Much Fiber Do You Need?

Here are daily recommendations for most healthy adults:

- Men ages 50 years and younger: 38 grams fiber per day
- Men ages 51 years and older: 30 grams fiber per day
- Women ages 50 years and younger: 25 grams fiber per day
- Women ages 51 years and older: 21 grams fiber per day

Tips for Getting More Fiber

- Start slowly. Adding too much fiber too fast can cause gas, cramps, and diarrhea. Add one high-fiber food, adjust to it, and then add another.
- Drink plenty of water. This keeps fiber moving through your digestive tract.
- Get fiber from a variety of foods. This helps you get all the nutrients you need each day.
- Include fiber at every meal.
- Eat the peels. The edible skins of many fruits and vegetables, like apples and potatoes, contain fiber. Remember to wash skins before eating.
- Go with the **whole** grain. Whole grain foods are good sources of fiber.
 - Look for products that list a whole grain as the first ingredient, such as whole wheat, oats, corn, or barley.
 - Read the Nutrition Facts label and choose breads that have at least 2 grams (g) of fiber per slice.
- Get your fiber from foods. A doctor or dietitian can help you decide whether fiber supplements are a good idea for you.

Types of Fiber

There are two types of fiber in food:

- **Insoluble fiber** is the nondigestible part of plants (roughage). It adds bulk and moves food through your digestive system. Insoluble fiber can help relieve constipation. The peel on fruits and vegetables is one example of insoluble fiber.
- **Soluble fiber** attracts water and can help resolve diarrhea. Soluble fiber also helps reduce cholesterol. Oats are an example of soluble fiber.



Which Foods Have Fiber?

| Food | Amount | Total Fiber (grams) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Grains | | |
| Bran cereal | 1/3 cup | 8.6 |
| Raisin bran cereal | 3/4 cup | 5.3 |
| Oatmeal, dry | 1/3 cup | 2.7 |
| Whole wheat pasta, cooked | 1/2 cup | 2.7 |
| Whole grain bread | 1 slice | 2+ |
| Brown rice, cooked | 1/2 cup | 2 |
| Vegetables | | |
| Green peas, cooked | 1/2 cup | 4.3 |
| Brussels sprouts, cooked | 1/2 cup | 3.8 |
| Sweet potato, cooked | 1/2 cup | 3.8 |
| Potato, cooked | 1 medium | 3.0 |
| Winter squash, cooked | 1/2 cup | 3.0 |
| Asparagus or spinach, cooked | 1/2 cup | 2.8 |
| Broccoli, cooked | 1/2 cup | 2.4 |
| Carrots, raw | 1 medium | 2.3 |
| Fruits and Nuts | | |
| Raspberries | 1 cup | 3.3 |
| Apple or pear with peel, orange | 1 small | 2.8 |
| Banana | 1 small | 2.2 |
| Strawberries | 1 cup | 2.2 |
| Peanut butter | 2 tablespoons | 2 |
| Apricots, dried | 7 halved | 2 |
| Raisins | 1/4 cup | 2 |
| Peach with skin | 1 medium | 2 |
| Dried Beans and Peas (cooked) | | |
| Kidney beans | 1/2 cup | 7.9 |
| Black beans | 1/2 cup | 6.1 |
| Lentils | 1/2 cup | 5.2 |
| Chickpeas (garbanzo beans) | 1/2 cup | 4.3 |