

## Fibre for children

Dietary fibre is the part of plant food which is not broken down completely by our bodies. Fibre is only found in plant foods such as cereals, cereal based foods, fruits and vegetables. There is no fibre in foods that come from an animal e.g. meat or dairy foods.

Dietary fibre plays an important role in keeping our bowels regular. A low fibre diet can lead to constipation and other health related issues. Constipation is dry, hard faeces that are difficult to pass.

Increasing fibre intake helps with constipation as it attracts and absorbs water into the bowel. It can also help to reduce the risk of diseases such as heart disease, certain cancers and diabetes.

There are two main types of fibre, insoluble fibre and soluble fibre. *Insoluble fibre* absorbs water therefore providing bulk. It helps with producing soft motions which are easy to pass.

*Soluble fibre* forms a soft gel in the bowel which helps to increase the mass and allowing for easy passage.

### Tips to increase fibre in your diet and maintain regular bowel habits

- ❖ Choose wholemeal or multigrain breads or white bread with added fibre.
- ❖ Choose wholegrain breakfast cereals eg. Bran cereals (not suitable for children less than 5), weetbix, vitabrits, oat bran, fibreplus, muesli, porridge.
- ❖ Choose wholemeal pasta and brown rice instead of white pasta or white rice.
- ❖ Try to avoid plain biscuits, cakes, pies and pasties. Instead, offer wholemeal biscuits eg. Wholemeal saladas or premiums, shredded wheatmeal, sweet biscuits with dried fruit
- ❖ Replace white flour with wholemeal flour in recipes for cake, biscuits and pastries. Add dried and fresh fruit to recipes.
- ❖ Increase fibre rich foods such as fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds (Note: nut pastes from 12months, later if family history of nut allergy. Whole nuts for children over the age 5yrs due to choking risk )

- ❖ Leave skins on fruits and vegetables where possible to increase fibre content.
- ❖ Add legumes such as kidney beans, lentils or split peas to casserole dishes and soups to increase fibre.
- ❖ Add a can of red kidney beans to spaghetti bolognese or Shepherd's pie and use less mince.
- ❖ Limit high fat food eg. Take-aways are often low in fibre.

### Drink plenty of water

- ❖ Water is essential to make bowel motions softer. Increasing fibre without increasing water can make constipation worse.
- ❖ To allow fibre to work your child must drink at least 4–6 cups of fluid daily. Children should have 1000 – 1500mls per day.
- ❖ Regular meals and regular exercise. Skipping meals may upset your body's routine.
- ❖ Exercising for at least 60 minutes per day e.g. Walking will help keep bowels regular.
- ❖ Ensure your child has sufficient time to go to the toilet and do not rush them.

### How much fibre is enough?

	Adequate Intake (AI) (g/day)
<b>Infants</b>	
0–6 months	No AI has been set
7–12 months	No AI has been set
<b>Children and Adolescents</b>	
<b>All</b>	
1–3 yr	14g/day
4–8 yr	18g/day
<b>Boys</b>	
9–13 yr	24g/day
14–18yr	28g/day
<b>Girls</b>	
9–13 yr	20g/day
14–18 yr	22g/day

Food	Serve size	Fibre (g)	Food	Serve size	Fibre (g)
<b><u>Breads and grains</u></b>			<b><u>Fruit</u></b>		
Wholemeal bread	30g/1 slice	2.0	Apple	1 medium	3.0
White bread	28g/1 slice	1.0	Orange	1 medium	3.5
White high fibre bread	28g/1 slice	1.5	Mango	1 medium	5.0
Pita bread	60g	2.5	Prune	6 medium	4.5
Fruit bread	30g/1 slice	1.0	Banana	1 small	2.5
Cornflakes	1 cup	1.0	Grapes	100g	1.0
Bran flakes	1 cup	6.5	Sultanas	30g	1.5
Weetbix	30g/2 biscuits	3.5	Dried apricot	6 small	2.5
All Bran	40g	11.5	Canned fruit	1 cup	3.5
Fruity bix	10 pieces	3.6	Strawberries	½ punnet	4.5
Muesli	60 g/1/2 cup	6.0	<b><u>Vegetables</u></b>		
Sultana Bran	1 cup	2.9	Potato no skin	100g	1.0
Porridge	½ cup raw	4.0	Broccoli	100g	4.0
Grinners	1 cup	2.1	Capsicum	90g	1.5
Just Right	¼ cup	2.0	Potato skin	100g	1.7
Fruit N Nut Weeties	1 cup	2.3	Corn on the cob	150g	5.0
Cornflakes	30g/1 cup	0	Carrots, cooked	½ cup	3.0
Rice Bubbles	30g/1 cup	0.5	Green beans	100g	2.5
White rice cooked	1 cup	1.5	Peas (frozen)	½ cup	4.5
Brown rice cooked	1 cup	3.0	Pumpkin	85g	1.5
White pasta cooked	1 cup	3.0	Tomato	1 medium	2.0
W/Meal pasta cooked	1 cup	8.5	Zucchini	1 medium	1.5
Shredded wheatmeal	2 biscuits	2.0	Salad	1 cup	1–2
Milk arrowroots	2 biscuits	0.5	Baked beans	220g	10.5
Sao's	3 biscuits	0.5	<b><u>Nuts</u></b>		
Wholemeal crackers	6 biscuits	2.0	Peanut paste	1 tbsp	2.0
Rice cakes	2 cakes	0.5	Peanuts	30g	2.5
<b><u>Miscellaneous</u></b>			Cashews	50g	3.0
Popcorn	1 cup	1.0	Almonds	30g	4.3
Corn chips	50g	5.0			



### Meal plan Average of 25 g per day

	Fibre (g)
<b>Breakfast</b>	
2 weetbix with milk	3.5
½ punnet strawberries	2.0
<b>Morning Tea</b>	
Yoghurt and banana	2.5
<b>Lunch</b>	
Sandwich wholemeal bread	4.0
Meat/fish/egg/chicken	
Slice of cheese	
Salad 1 cup	1.0–2.0
<b>Afternoon tea</b>	
6 small pieces of dried apricot	2.5
<b>Dinner</b>	
Meat or substitute	
Baked potato	
Broccoli (50g)	2.0
Carrot (1/2 cup)	3.0
<b>Supper</b>	
Cup of milk	
1 cup of canned fruit	3.5

The website below contains The Bristol Stool Chart. It is a medical aid designed to classify the form of 'poo' into seven categories

Types 1 and 2 indicate constipation.

<http://www.childhoodconstipation.com/About/Normal.aspx>