

Increasing dietary fibre

This resource has information on fibre and how to include it in your diet.

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre is the edible part of plants that is not digested or absorbed in the small bowel. It is broken down by bacteria in the large bowel. This process is important as it helps our body to have a bowel motion. There are different types of fibre that affect bowel motions and gut health in different ways.

Why is fibre important?

Eating enough fibre in your diet can help support healthy and regular bowel motions. A meal high in fibre is processed more slowly, keeping you fuller for longer. High fibre meals are often lower in calories, unhealthy fats and added sugars. Fibre can help with blood sugar levels and cholesterol.

Different types of fibre

Each type of fibre plays an important role in the development of good bacteria in the bowel.

1. Soluble fibre: dissolves in water, making a gel-like or softer poo. This can slow the movement of food through the large bowel. Soluble fibre can help with constipation as it can help soften your poo. It can also help with diarrhoea as it can slow down and thicken your poo. Examples include:

- Bananas, apples, oranges, pears, berries
- Oats and oat bran
- Legumes and pulses (e.g. kidney beans, chickpeas)
- Okra, eggplant, peas, avocado, sweet potato, carrot, turnip
- Psyllium husk (Metamucil)[®]
- Benefiber[®]

2. Insoluble fibre: does not dissolve in water and adds bulk to the stool. This can speed up the movement of stool through the bowel and can help with constipation. Examples include:

- Fruit (skin and seeds have the most fibre)
- Vegetables (skin and seeds)
- Wholegrain products e.g. breads, pasta, brown rice, quinoa, barley
- Nuts and seeds e.g. flaxseed, chia
- Wheat and rice bran

3. Resistant starch: is a fibre that feeds the good bacteria in our gut (prebiotic). Sources of resistant starch include:

- Cooked and cooled potato, rice, quinoa, and pasta
- Unripe bananas
- Legumes
- Oats

Tips to improve fibre intake and bowel movements

1. Increase your fibre intake slowly to reduce bloating, pain and cramps.
2. Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water per day.
3. Eat at least 5 serves of vegetables each day (fresh, frozen, dried, or low salt canned).
 - 1 serve = 1 cup raw vegetables or ½ cup cooked.
4. Eat 2 serves of fruit each day (fresh, frozen, or canned in natural juice).
 - 1 serve = 1 medium piece of fruit (e.g. apple, banana), 1 cup canned fruit, or 2 smaller pieces of fruit (e.g. apricots, kiwi fruits).
5. Choose a high fibre breakfast cereal with at least 4g of fibre per serve (check the nutrition panel).
6. Add wholegrains by choosing wholegrain/meal breads and wraps, adding brown rice or quinoa to your meals and cooking with high fibre flours instead of white flour.
7. Include nuts and seeds in your diet by adding to your salad, cereal, yoghurt or having a small handful as a snack.
8. Add legumes and lentils to soups, stews, and casseroles.
9. Swap processed grains and cereals like cakes, pies, pastries and biscuits to multigrain or high fibre options such as crackers & hummus, high fibre biscuits, fruits and vegetables.
10. Keep active, as this will help move food through your bowel.

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11. Never ignore the urge to go to the toilet.

12. Use the correct position when toileting: lean forward (back straight), forearms on thighs or elbows on knees, raise feet slightly so knees are higher than hips.

How much fibre should I have?

Women: 25 grams per day

Men: 30 grams per day

These are a guide for the general population – your health professional may adjust this based on your needs.

Examples of fibre foods with estimated fibre content:

Food / Drink (average serving size)	Fibre per serve (g)
Breakfast Cereals	
Rolled oats/porridge (½ cup)	3
Weet-Bix®/Vita Brits® (2 biscuits)	4
Muesli, raw (½ cup)	5
Guardian® (½ cup)	6
Fibre Plus® (½ cup)	6
Special K, Advantage® (½ cup)	7
All-Bran, Wheat Flakes® (½ cup)	8
All-Bran® (Original) (½ cup)	13
Grains	
Pasta (1 cup)	2
Wholegrain bread (1 slice)	2
Wholemeal bread (1 slice)	2
Brown rice (½ cup) cooked	3
Quinoa (½ cup) cooked	3
Flour	
Oat bran (1 tablespoon)	2
Rice bran (1 tablespoon)	3
Wheat bran (1 tablespoon)	5
Chickpea flour (1 cup)	9
Spelt flour (1 cup)	9
Buckwheat flour (1 cup)	12
Wholemeal flour (1 cup)	16
Coconut flour (50g)	19

Beans / Legumes and Lentils	
Chickpeas, canned (½ cup)	5
Kidney beans, canned (½ cup)	5
Baked beans (½ cup)	7
Cannellini beans, canned (½ cup)	8
Nuts and seeds	
Cashews / Walnuts (30g)	2
LSA mix (1 tbs)	2
Almonds (30g)	3
Linseeds / flaxseed (1 tbs)	3
Almond meal (1 cup)	6
Chia seeds (1 tbs)	6
Chia bran (1 tbs)	7
Vegetables	
Non-starchy vegetables (½ cup)	1-3
Potato (medium 150g)	2
Sweet potato (medium 115g)	4
Fruit	
<i>Fresh Fruit</i>	
Apple, banana, orange (medium)	2-4
Pear (medium)	6
Raspberries (1 cup)	8
Dates (5)	3
<i>Dried Fruit</i>	
Prunes (5)	2
Dried apricots (5)	3
<i>Fruit Juice</i>	
Prune juice (240ml)	3
Pear juice (240ml)	4

Summary

- Fibre is important for bowel health.
- Eat more fresh food such as fruits, vegetables, and wholegrains.
- Include a wide variety of fibre to help support your bowel health.

For further information, contact your dietitian or nutritionist: _____