

Fibre

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre is the edible part of plants that is not digested or absorbed in the small bowel. It is usually completely or partially fermented (broken down) by bacteria in the large bowel. This process is important as it helps our body to have a bowel movement.

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

Why is fibre important?

Eating enough fibre in your diet can help with:

- Constipation
- Bloating
- Diarrhoea
- Preventing the development of diverticulosis and diverticulitis
- Promoting healthy gut bacteria

A meal high in fibre is processed more slowly, keeping you fuller for longer. High fibre meals are often lower in calories, fat and added sugars. This can help with blood sugar levels and cholesterol.

How much fibre should I have?

Women 25 grams per day

Men 30 grams per day

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Different types of fibre

1. Soluble fibre: dissolves in water, making a gel-like or thickened stool. This can slow the movement of food through the large bowel. Soluble fibre can help with both constipation (softens stools) and diarrhoea (slows and thickens stools). Examples include:

- Bananas
- Oats and oat bran
- Barley
- Chia seeds
- Legumes and pulses (e.g. kidney beans, chickpeas)
- Okra, eggplant
- Psyllium (Metamucil)
- Benefiber

2. Insoluble fibre: does not dissolve in water, adds bulk to the stool and speeds up the movement of stool through the bowel. This is important for managing constipation. Examples include:

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

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

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

Tips to improve fibre intake and bowel movements

1. Increase your fibre intake slowly and ensure you drink enough water with fibre to reduce bloating, gas and cramps. Aim for least 6-8 glasses of water per day.

2. Eat plenty of vegetables. Aim for 5 serves of vegetables each day (fresh, frozen, dried or low salt canned). Ideas to increase vegetables in your diet:

- Make a rice or quinoa salad with roast vegetables.
- Grate vegetables into mince dishes.
- Snack on vegetables (e.g. carrots and celery sticks with dip).
- Add salad and vegetables to your sandwich, wrap or omelette.
- Choose a variety of different coloured vegetables for your main meal.
- Add vegetables to soups and stews.

3. Eat 2 serves of fruit each day (fresh, frozen or canned in natural juice). Ideas to increase fruit in your diet:

- Add to your cereal
- Have as a snack
- Add to yoghurt

4. Choose a high fibre breakfast cereal with at least 4g of fibre per serve.

5. Add extra fibre to your breakfast cereal, for example:

- 1-2 tablespoons of bran of your choice
- Nuts and seeds (e.g. LSA, chia seeds)

6. Include wholegrains in meals, for example:

- Choose wholegrain/meal breads, wraps.
- Make salads with wholegrains (e.g. brown rice or quinoa salad).
- Cook with high fibre flours instead of white flour.
- Make porridge, Bircher muesli or chia pudding for breakfast.

7. Regularly include nuts and seeds in your diet

- Sprinkle on your salad, cereal, yoghurt or have as a snack.

8. Include legumes and lentils

- Add to soups, stews and casseroles.
- Include baked beans on toast at breakfast or lunch.

9. Limit alcohol and caffeine

10. Limit foods containing refined grains like cakes, muffins, pies, pastries and biscuits. These types of foods are also often high in saturated and trans fats, sugar and salt, and don't have much fibre, vitamins or minerals.

11. Regular daily exercise

12. Never ignore the urge to defecate

Examples of fibre foods with estimated fibre content:

| Food/drink (average serving size) | Fibre per serve (g) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Breakfast cereals | |
| Rolled oats/porridge (45g) | 3 |
| Weetbix/Vita Brits (2 biscuits) | 4 |
| Muesli, raw (45g) | 5 |
| Guardian (45g) | 6 |
| Fibre Plus (45g) | 6 |
| Special K, Advantage (45g) | 7 |
| All Bran, Wheat Flakes (45g) | 8 |
| All Bran (Original) (45g) | 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 tbs) | 2 |
| Rice bran (1 tbs) | 3 |
| Wheat bran (1 tbs) | 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 | |
| Chick peas – 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 (med 150g) | 2 |
| Sweet potato (med 115g) | 4 |
| Fruit | |
| Fresh fruit | |
| Apple, banana, orange (medium) | 2-4 |
| Pear (medium) | 6 |
| Raspberries (1 cup) | 8 |
| Dates (5) | 3 |
| Dried fruit | |
| Prunes (5) | 2 |
| Dried apricots (5) | 3 |
| Fruit juice | |
| Prune juice (240ml) | 3 |
| Pear juice (240ml) | 4 |