

# Fiber



**You get fiber when you eat foods that come from plants, including fruits, vegetables, grains and beans.** Your body doesn't digest fiber, but it does play a key role in keeping your digestive system working and helping you have healthy bowel movements. The two types of fiber are soluble and insoluble.

**Soluble fiber** dissolves in water and forms a gel. It helps slow down how fast food moves from your stomach to your intestines and can prevent diarrhea.

**Insoluble fiber** absorbs water, which makes your stool soft and bulky. It helps you have regular bowel movements and prevents constipation.

## Daily Fiber Intake

Here's how much fiber you need every day, depending on your age and sex:

AGE	MEN	WOMEN
Ages 50 & younger	38 grams	25 grams
Ages 51 & older	30 grams	21 grams

When you start adding fiber to your diet, do it slowly. Don't try to add a lot at once—this can make digestive symptoms worse. Also drink plenty of water to help the fiber move through your digestive system.

## Fiber and Your Health

A high-fiber diet can benefit your health in several ways. Fiber helps with these digestive conditions:

- **Constipation**—Insoluble fiber helps stool move through your digestive tract. It makes your stool bulkier and softer, so it's easier to pass.
- **Diarrhea**—Soluble fiber can help with loose, watery stools because it slows down how fast food moves through your intestines.

Fiber can also help with these:

- **Cholesterol**—Soluble fiber helps lower your LDL or "bad" cholesterol. It does this by binding to the bile (which is made up of cholesterol) in your liver and taking it out of your body. This reduces the amount of cholesterol left for your intestines to absorb.
- **Blood sugar**—Fiber, especially soluble fiber, helps control your blood sugar because it slows down how fast your body absorbs sugar. Stable blood sugar levels can decrease your risk of diabetes or help prevent complications if you already have diabetes.
- **Weight control**—Soluble fiber slows down how fast food moves through your intestines, which can help keep you feeling full. This makes it easier to manage your hunger during or in between meals.

## Tips to Help You Eat More Fiber

Try these ideas to help increase your daily fiber intake:

- Choose whole-wheat bread, pasta, tortillas and rice, instead of white varieties.
- Use whole-wheat flour when baking. Try substituting half of the white flour in a recipe for whole-wheat.
- Eat fruit at every meal.
- Eat high-fiber snacks like raw veggies or popcorn.
- Choose high-fiber oatmeal or cereal for breakfast and top it with fruit.



- Cook with oat bran. You can add it to meatloaf, burgers, casseroles and baked goods.
- Eat more beans and lentils. Add them to salads, soups and stews.
- Check nutrition labels on packaged foods. Choose products that have more fiber per serving. And look for “whole grain” or “whole wheat” at the beginning of the ingredients list.
- If you don’t get enough fiber from food, ask your doctor about taking a fiber supplement. Your doctor can recommend the type of supplement that’s best for you.

To learn more, visit:

- **Cleveland Clinic**  
[www.clevelandclinic.org](http://www.clevelandclinic.org)
- **Medline Plus**  
[www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)

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## Fiber Food Chart

Fruits	SERVING SIZE	TOTAL FIBER (GRAMS)
Raspberries	1 cup	8.0
Pear ( <i>with skin</i> )	1 med.	5.5
Apple ( <i>with skin</i> )	1 med.	4.4
Blueberries	1 cup	4.0
Strawberries ( <i>halves</i> )	1 ¼ cup	3.8
Banana	1 med.	3.1
Orange	1 med.	3.1
Figs, dried	2 med.	1.6
Raisins	2 tbsp.	1.0

Beans, nuts & seeds	SERVING SIZE	TOTAL FIBER (GRAMS)
Split peas ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	16.3
Lentils ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	15.6
Black beans ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	15.0
Lima beans ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	13.2
Baked beans ( <i>vegetarian, canned, cooked</i> )	1 cup	10.4
Navy beans ( <i>cooked</i> )	½ cup	9.5
Sunflower seed kernels	¼ cup	3.9
Almonds	1 oz. (23 nuts)	3.5
Pistachios	1 oz. (49 nuts)	2.9
Pecans	1 oz. (19 halves)	2.7

Vegetables	SERVING SIZE	TOTAL FIBER (GRAMS)
Artichoke ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 med.	10.3
Peas ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	8.8
Broccoli ( <i>boiled</i> )	1 cup	5.1
Turnip greens ( <i>boiled</i> )	1 cup	5.0
Sweet potato ( <i>with skin, baked</i> )	1 med.	4.8
Sweet corn ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	4.2
Brussels sprouts ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	4.1
Potato ( <i>with skin, baked</i> )	1 med.	2.9
Tomato paste	¼ cup	2.7
Carrot ( <i>raw</i> )	1 med.	1.7

Grains, cereals & pasta	SERVING SIZE	TOTAL FIBER (GRAMS)
Spaghetti ( <i>cooked, whole-wheat</i> )	1 cup	6.2
Barley, pearled ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	6.0
Bran flakes	¾ cup	5.3
Oat bran muffin	1 med.	5.2
Oatmeal ( <i>cooked, quick, regular or instant</i> )	1 cup	4.0
Brown rice ( <i>cooked</i> )	1 cup	3.5
Bread ( <i>rye, whole-wheat or whole-grain</i> )	1 slice	1.9
Popcorn ( <i>air-popped</i> )	1 cup	1.3

## Remember:

- There are two types of fiber, soluble and insoluble.
- Fiber can help you have regular bowel movements and can ease symptoms of diarrhea and constipation.
- Always drink plenty of water when adding fiber to your diet. Fiber needs water to work its best.