

Fiber

“Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.” John 6: 31-33

Fiber is the part of the plant that supports its structure, and humans are unable to digest this part of the plant. This amazing substance can promote good health and support a person's ideal weight. The average American diet is deficient in dietary fiber.

Fiber helps the large colon work normally, and can even correct some disorders of the colon. Fiber promotes the wavelike contractions that keep food moving through the colon. When waste moves too slowly, the stool becomes hard, resulting in constipation. High fiber foods expand inside the colon by absorbing many times their weight in water. This increases the weight and size of the stool, and creates a soft, bulky stool that is easy to pass.

The benefits of fiber in the diet are vast. Many studies show a reduction in colon cancer in people who eat a lot of fiber. It also reduces the likelihood of coronary artery (heart) disease and stroke. Diabetics who eat adequate servings of fiber have improved blood sugar control, because soluble fiber slows the rise in blood sugar levels after a meal. It also reduces the incidence of hemorrhoids, diverticulosis (small pouches in the lining of the bowel), colon cancer, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

There are two types of fiber: soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber dissolves in water, and forms a gelatin like substance in the bowel. It is found in fruits, legumes (peas and beans), oatmeal, barley, and carrots. Psyllium is also a soluble fiber, and is used in bran cereals. It is the main ingredient in Metamucil. Soluble fiber has been shown to lower LDL (bad cholesterol) levels by 10-15%.

Insoluble fiber is what we think of as roughage. The word insoluble means it will not dissolve in water, so this fiber does not break down easily in the colon. Roughage includes whole wheat bread, brown rice, rye, bran, and most vegetables.

A healthy adult needs about 12 grams of fiber for every 1000 calories they take in, which comes out to about 25-30 grams of fiber every day. To calculate how much a child needs, add 5 to their age. For example, a 7 year old would need: $5 + 7 = 12$ grams of fiber daily.

If you are planning to increase the amount of fiber in your diet, start SLOWLY. Gas and cramping will result from too much fiber introduced into the diet too quickly. Also remember to **drink** plenty of water, fruit juice, and vegetable juices. Eat slowly so the act of chewing and your digestive juices can begin to break down the fiber.

Another great benefit to eating fiber is the stomach will feel fuller sooner, helping you to eat less. This is a huge bonus when watching your weight, because foods high in fiber tend to be low in calories.

The following gives you an idea of foods high in fiber.

<u>Cups of Food</u>	<u>Grams of Fiber</u>	<u>Cups of Food</u>	<u>Grams of Fiber</u>
1 Split peas	16.3	1 Red Kidney beans	13.1
1 Raw raspberries	8.0	1 Whole wheat spaghetti	6.3
½ All bran cereal	8.8	1 Cooked oatmeal	4.0
1 Banana	3.1	1 Blackberries	7.6
1 Cooked lentils	15.6		

Remember, eat plenty of fiber, increasing the amount of fiber in your diet slowly. **Eat healthy---Be healthy!!!**

For more info: www.mayoclinic.com/health/fiber/NU00033 or www.wehealnewyork.org/healthinfo/dietaryfiber/index.html

Blessings, Nurse Karen