



Fiber Facts:

Why fiber is important

Why is fiber important?

Including fiber in your diet is good for your health in lots of ways. It can:

- Reduce the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- Lower the risk of several forms of cancer.
- Improve cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Help regulate your digestion.
- Help you feel fuller, so you may eat less.

What is fiber?

Fiber is the part of plant foods that our bodies can't digest or absorb. It is found in fruits, vegetables, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

There are 2 kinds of dietary fiber: insoluble and soluble. We benefit from both.

Soluble fiber comes from fruit, some vegetables, oats, beans, peas, lentils, and barley. When mixed with liquid, it forms a gel, which helps control blood sugar and reduces cholesterol.

Insoluble fiber comes from fruits, grains, and vegetables. It adds bulk and acts like a brush to clean out the colon. It helps food pass through the digestive tract more quickly and prevents constipation.

What is a whole grain?

A **whole grain** has all three of its original parts:

- The bran (fiber-rich outer layer).
- The endosperm (middle layer).
- The germ (inner layer). Whole grains are rich in nutrients, including fiber.

Whole wheat, oatmeal, rye, cornmeal, bulgur, barley, brown rice, and even popcorn are all whole grains.

A **refined grain** has been milled, so only the middle layer (endosperm) is left. Milling removes much of the vitamins. "Enriched" flour has had some of the nutrients added back, but not the fiber.

How much fiber do I need?

The American Heart Association recommends between 25 and 38 grams of fiber a day in a well-balanced diet. Since most people only consume about half that amount of fiber, try these suggestions to increase the fiber in your diet.

Adding more fiber to your diet

- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Try more recipes with beans, peas, barley, lentils, quinoa, bulgur, or brown rice.
- Choose breads, cereals, tortillas, and crackers that list a whole grain as the first ingredient on the label.
- Make at least half of your grain servings whole grains.
- Add fiber to your diet slowly, over 2 to 3 weeks. If you add it too fast, you may feel bloated or have gas pains.
- Unless your doctor has told you not to, drink 6 to 8 cups of water and other fluids a day to aid digestion.
- If you eat wheat bran to keep your bowels moving, start with 1 teaspoon per meal. Increase slowly to 2 to 4 tablespoons a day. If you use psyllium fiber supplements, be

sure to follow the directions and drink enough fluids to remain hydrated.

- Buy unprocessed foods when you can. Food processing often removes fiber.

Read food labels

Look for the "dietary fiber" content on food labels. Good sources of fiber have at least 10% of the "percent daily value" for fiber. To find whole-grain foods, look for the words whole wheat or whole grain in the ingredient list. "Multigrain," "wheat," and "enriched flour" do not mean whole grain. If you are eating gluten-free foods, be sure to check the label for fiber content.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Servings Per Container About 8	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 230	Calories from Fat 72
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	12 %
Saturated Fat 1g	5 %
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0 %
Sodium 160mg	7 %
Total Carbohydrate 37g	12 %
Dietary Fiber 4g	16 %
Sugars 1g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A	10 %
Vitamin C	8 %
Calcium	20 %
Iron	45 %
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

Fiber Content of Foods

Vegetables	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Asparagus, cooked*	½ cup	2g
Avocado*	½ cup	6g
Baked potato with skin	1 medium	4g
Beets	½ cup	2g
Breadfruit (ulu)	½ cup	3g
Broccoli cooked	½ cup	3g
Brussel sprouts*	½ cup	3g
Cabbage, cooked	½ cup	1g
Carrots, raw	1 medium	2g
Cauliflower, cooked	½ cup	1g
Chinese mustard greens	½ cup	2g
Corn, cooked	½ cup	2g
Eggplant, cooked*	½ cup	2g
Green beans, cooked	½ cup	2g
Kabocha pumpkin*	½ cup	2g
Lettuce, Romaine	2 cups	2g
Onions, chopped	½ cup	1g
Peas, cooked	½ cup	4g
Poi	½ cup	1g
Spinach or luau leaves, cooked	½ cup	3-4g
Sweet potato* or taro (kalo)*, cooked	½ cup	4g
Tomato, raw	1 medium	2g
Turnips, cooked	½ cup	2g

Beans, Nuts, and Seeds	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Almonds	¼ cup	4g
Black beans, cooked*	½ cup	8g
Black, kidney, or pinto beans*	½ cup	8g
Chia seeds*	2 tbs	6g
Flaxseed, ground*	2 tbs	4g
Lentils, cooked*	½ cup	8g
Lima beans, cooked*	½ cup	7g
Macadamia nuts	¼ cup	3g
Mungo beans*	¼ cup	8g
Navy beans, cooked*	½ cup	10g
Peanuts	¼ cup	3g
Pecans, chopped	¼ cup	3g
Pistachios	¼ cup	3g
Soybeans (Edamame)*	½ cup	5g

*High in soluble fiber. Source: USDA National Nutrition Database for Standard Reference.

Fruits	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Apple, with peel*	1 medium	3g
Apricots*	1 medium	1g
Asian pear*	1 medium	4g
Banana	1 medium	3g
Cantaloupe	½ cup	1g
Cherries	10 medium	1g
Figs, raw	1 medium	1g
Guava	½ cup	4g
Honeydew	½ cup	2g
Mango*	1 medium	4g
Nectarine	1 medium	2g
Orange*	1 medium	3g
Papaya	½ cup	1g
Peach, with skin	1 medium	2g
Pear, with skin*	1 medium	5g
Pineapple	½ cup	1g
Prunes*	½ cup	6g
Raisins	½ cup	3g
Raspberries	½ cup	4g
Strawberries, sliced	½ cup	2g

Cereal	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
All bran (varies with brand)	½ cup	10-14g
Bran flakes (varies with brand)	1 cup	7g
Bulgar, whole wheat, cooked	1 cup	6.5g
Cheerios	1 cup	4g
Fiber One	½ cup	14g
Oats, old fashioned, cooked*	1 cup	4.5g
Oats, steel cut, cooked*	1 cup	5.5g
Popcorn	3 cups	3g
Raisin bran	1 cup	7g
Shredded wheat	1 cup	6g
Wheat bran	2 tbs	3g
Wheaties	1 cup	3g

Grains	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Barley, cooked*	1 cup	6g
Brown rice, cooked	1 cup	4g
Farro, cooked	1 cup	5g
Quinoa, cooked	1 cup	5g
Rice noodles	1 cup	2g
Rye bread	1 slice	2g
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	3g
English muffin, whole grain	½ muffin	3g
Pasta, whole wheat, cooked	1 cup	4g

Additional resources

Visit Kaiser Permanente's Center for Healthy Living at kphealthyme.com or contact your Prevention and Health Education Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.

© 2006, The Permanente Medical Group, Inc. All rights reserved. Regional Health Education. Modified with Permission. HI Region. Prevention and Health Education Department (Revised 04/20) RL 5.8