

What Is Fiber?

Fiber is a part of plant foods that your body cannot break down. Even though you can't digest it, fiber is very good for you - it helps your body in many ways. Most adults need about 25 to 38 grams of fiber every day. Women need about 25 grams, and men need about 38 grams. Most Americans only get about half of what they need.

Foods with lots of fiber are usually low in calories and fat. They also help you feel full longer. To find out how much fiber is in packaged food, look at the Nutrition Facts label on the package - it tells you how many grams of fiber are in one serving.

Two Types of Fiber

There are two main types of fiber: soluble and insoluble. Both are good for you!

- **Soluble fiber** dissolves in water and turns into a gel-like material. It is found in oats, beans, peas, apples, strawberries, and citrus fruits like oranges. Soluble fiber can help:
 - Lower cholesterol, which is good for your heart
 - Keep blood sugar levels steady
 - Feed the healthy bacteria in your gut
- **Insoluble fiber** does not dissolve in water. Think of it like a tiny sponge that soaks up liquid and gets bigger. It is found in whole-wheat bread, brown rice, carrots, corn, and the skins of fruits like apples. Insoluble fiber can help:
 - Prevent constipation (trouble going to the bathroom)
 - Keep your digestive system moving smoothly

High-Fiber Foods to Try

- **Whole grains:** Make at least half of your grains, whole grains each day. Good choices include whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, and bran cereals.
- **Fruits:** Aim for about 1½ to 2 cups of fruit each day. Apples, oranges, pears, bananas, strawberries, and raspberries are great choices. Tip: Whole fruit has much more fiber than fruit juice!
- **Vegetables:** Aim for about 2½ to 3 cups of vegetables each day. Broccoli, carrots, peas, corn, asparagus, and Brussels sprouts are all good picks.
- **Beans and lentils:** These are fiber superstars! Try kidney beans, black beans, chickpeas, and lentils in soups, salads, or as a side dish.
- **Nuts and seeds:** A small handful (about 1 ounce) gives you 2 to 3 grams of fiber. Try almonds, pistachios, or sunflower seeds.

Dietary Fiber Content of Common Fruits, Vegetables, Grains and Other Foods

Fruits		
	Serving Size	Fiber (grams)
Raspberries	1 cup	8.0
Pear	1 medium	5.5
Apple (with skin)	1 medium	4.4
Banana	1 medium	3.1
Orange	1 medium	3.1
Strawberries	1 cup, sliced	3.3
Dried figs	2 figs	4.6
Raisins	1 small box	0.6

Vegetables and Beans		
Black beans	1 cup, cooked	15.0
Lima beans	1 cup, cooked	13.2
Baked beans	1 cup	10.4
Lentils	½ cup, cooked	7.8
Split peas	½ cup, cooked	8.1
Green peas	½ cup	3.5
Broccoli	½ cup	2.6
Brussels sprouts	½ cup	2.0
Carrots, raw	½ cup	1.8
Corn	½ cup	2.0
Spinach, cooked	½ cup	2.2
Potato, boiled	½ cup	1.6

Grains		
	Serving Size	Fiber (grams)
Raisin bran cereal	1 cup	7.5
Whole-wheat spaghetti	1 cup, cooked	6.3
Barley	1 cup, cooked	6.0
Shredded wheat	2 biscuits	5.0
Bran flakes	¾ cup	4.6
Popcorn (air-popped)	3 cups	3.6
Brown rice	1 cup, cooked	3.5
Oatmeal	¾ cup, cooked	3.0
Whole-wheat bread	1 slice	1.9

Nuts		
Almonds	1 ounce	3.5
Pistachios	1 ounce	2.9
Pecans	1 ounce	2.7
Mixed nuts	1 ounce	2.6

Tips for Eating More Fiber

- **Start slowly.** Add fiber to your diet a little at a time. Adding too much too fast can cause gas and bloating.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Water helps fiber do its job in your body.
- **Read food labels.** Look for foods with 3 or more grams of fiber per serving.
- **Eat a variety of foods.** Try different fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains to get both types of fiber.
- **Get fiber from food first.** Whole foods give you fiber plus vitamins and minerals. If you still fall short, talk to your doctor before starting a fiber supplement like psyllium or methylcellulose — especially if you take other medicines, since fiber can affect how they are absorbed.

If you have any additional questions, please contact our office **612-871-1145**