



Bulk Up On Fiber for Better Health

Dietary fiber is a necessary part of any healthy diet, not least for the important role it plays in regulating our digestive systems. Numerous studies have shown that consuming fiber-rich foods reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and intestinal disease, among other conditions.

Fiber is an essential part of our diets. It not only promotes a healthy digestive system, but also helps reduce the risk for some chronic diseases. Fiber itself is actually undigested carbohydrates that our bodies are incapable of breaking down. It comes in two varieties: soluble and insoluble.

• **Soluble fiber** dissolves in water to form a gel. It helps lower total cholesterol and LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, reducing the risk of heart disease. It also helps regulate blood sugar for people with diabetes. Sources include:

- Oatmeal and oat bran
- Nuts and seeds
- Peas
- Strawberries and blueberries
- Lentils
- Apples
- Pears
- Beans

• **Insoluble fiber** does not dissolve in water and passes through our bodies relatively intact. It obviously helps promote regular bowel movement and prevent constipation. But insoluble fiber also helps prevent colon cancer by keeping an optimal pH in our intestines that prevents microbes from producing cancerous substances. Sources include:

- Whole wheat bread and pasta
- Whole grain cereal
- Brown rice and couscous
- Carrots
- Cucumbers
- Zucchini
- Celery
- Tomatoes

Maintaining a balanced diet requires getting enough of both soluble and insoluble fiber. Unfortunately, Americans today eat half – or even less – of their daily recommended fiber. Current recommendations suggest a bare minimum of 20 grams of fiber a day, with teens and men requiring 30 grams or more. And the more calories you consume, the more fiber you need.

There are numerous things you can do to incorporate fiber-friendly options every day.

- Choose cereals, breads, and pastas with a minimum of 4 grams of fiber in each serving; opt for products with whole wheat flour
- Eat whole fruits instead of drinking fruit juices, which are also loaded with sugar
- Add seeds, nuts, beans, and peas to your salads and soups – try to substitute legumes for meat two to three times per week
- Keep frozen berries in your freezer and add them to cereal and yogurt
- Pack some baby carrots or your favorite cut-up veggies and take them with you for snacks

Recommended Fiber Intake		
	Men	Women
Age	Fiber grams/day	Fiber grams/day
1 to 3 years old	19	19
4 to 8	25	25
9 to 13	31	26
14 to 18	38	26
19 to 30	38	25
31 to 50	38	25
51 to 70	30	21
70+	30	21

Looking for creative ideas to add fiber to your diet?

Talk to the LiveLifeWell Registered Dietitian for free, confidential, one-on-one advice about smart food choices. She'll work with you to make sure your diet has the fiber and nutrients you need for better health. Call **(847)-937-5001** or visit **iLiveLifeWell.com** and schedule an appointment today.