

Grains of Truth about Fiber

Definition

Fiber is a general term for the indigestible part of plant foods. It provides almost no energy or calories. Grain products, fruits, legumes and vegetables are significant sources of fiber. In contrast, virtually no fiber is found in dairy products, meat, poultry, fish, fats and sweeteners. Cooking may slightly decrease the fiber content; freezing, canning, and other preservation methods have little effect.

There are two types of dietary fiber: soluble and insoluble.

Insoluble Fiber

Insoluble fiber is found in foods such as wheat bran, other whole grains and vegetables.

- ◆ Insoluble fiber aids in weight control if high fiber foods are substituted for high-fat, high calorie foods. High-fiber foods take longer to chew and provide a feeling of fullness.
- ◆ Wheat bran fiber may effectively reduce the risk of colon cancer and according to recent research, may help prevent breast cancer.

Soluble Fiber

Soluble fiber is found in legumes, various brans (oat, rice, barley, and corn), white flour products (white bread, bagels, past, etc.) and some fruits and vegetables.

- ◆ It lowers blood cholesterol in some people when eaten as a part of a low-fat diet, thus decreasing the risk for heart disease.
- ◆ It may help control blood sugar in people with diabetes and even reduce their insulin requirement. However, diabetics should follow a high fiber diet only under medical supervision.

Daily Consumption

High fiber diets are key to regular bowel movements and are believed to help reduce health risks, including the incidence of certain cancers, obesity and possibly high blood cholesterol.

There is currently no Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for fiber. However, the American Dietetic Association recommends a daily dose of 20 to 35 grams. According to the 1988 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Consumption Survey, Americans are only eating 12 grams each day.

Adding Fiber

- ◆ Eat 6-11 servings each day of bread, cereal, rice, and pasta. (For optimal health, try to get as many whole grain options as possible.)
- ◆ Choose a variety of fiber-rich foods instead of fiber supplements.
- ◆ Add bran to muffins, pancake batter, casseroles, breakfast cereals, and salads.
- ◆ Boost the fiber in cereals with fresh fruit and sprinkle with bran or ground flax seed.
- ◆ Choose whole-grain baked goods with raisins or other dried fruit.
- ◆ Add whole grains like brown rice and barley to your favorite soups and casseroles
- ◆ Be sure to increase your water intake while increasing fiber in your diet.
- ◆ Choose whole fruit over juice. Fiber is found mainly in the fruit peel and pulp, which may be removed when juice is made.
- ◆ Select high-fiber snacks like popcorn, fresh fruit, raw vegetables and nuts.

Fiber Finder

Food	One Serving	Fiber Per Serving
All-Bran, 1 oz.	1/3 cup	10.1 grams
Raisin Bran	1 cup	8.0 grams
Kidney Beans, cooked	1/2 cup	6.9 grams
Corn Bran, 1 oz.	2/3 cup	5.4 grams
Whole-wheat pita	1	5.0 grams
Lentils, cooked	1/2 cup	4.5 grams
Peas, cooked	1/2 cup	4.4 grams
Bran Muffin	1 average	4.0 grams
Apple, with skin	1	4.0 grams
Wheaties, 1 oz.	1 cup	2.6 grams
Broccoli, cooked	1/2 cup	2.3 grams
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	2.2 grams
Oatmeal, cooked	1/2 cup	2.0 grams
White Bread	1 slice	0.6 grams

Foods differ in the amount and type of dietary fiber. Many foods contain a combination of insoluble and soluble fiber. The content varies depending upon the season, growing conditions, ripeness and storage practices.

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