



What You Should Know About Fiber

Fiber is a virtually indigestible substance that is found mainly in the outer layers of plants. It is a special type of carbohydrate that passes through the human digestive system nearly unchanged, without being broken down into nutrients. Carbohydrates constitute the main source of energy for all body functions.

How Much Fiber Do I Need?

The recommended dietary fiber intake is **14 grams per 1,000 calories** consumed (*approximately 25 to 30 grams*) per day. For example, if you're a physically active woman who needs 2,000 calories a day, you should be aiming for 28 grams of dietary fiber a day. You could meet this goal by eating 1 cup raspberries (8 grams) and a whole-wheat English muffin (4.4 grams) for breakfast, 1/2 cup black beans (7.5 grams) with lunch, and 1 cup of mixed vegetables (8 grams) for dinner.

Check the Product Name & Ingredients

For many, but not all "whole-grain" food products, the words "whole" or "whole grain" may appear before the name (e.g., whole-wheat bread). But, because whole-grain foods cannot necessarily be identified by their color or name (brown bread, 9-grain bread, hearty grains bread, mixed grain bread, etc.) are not always "whole-grain", you need to look at the ingredient list. The whole grain should be the first ingredient listed.

The following are some examples of how whole grains should be listed:

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|------------------------|------------|
| whole wheat | brown rice |
| quinoa | buckwheat |
| whole oats/oatmeal | whole rye |
| bulgur (cracked wheat) | sorghum |
| whole grain | barley |
| popcorn | millet |
| wild rice | triticale |

Why is fiber important?

- » It has an influence on the digestion process from start to finish.
- » Fiber demands that food be more thoroughly chewed, so it slows down the eating process and helps contribute to a feeling of being full, which can also help prevent overeating.
- » Fiber slows digestion and absorption so that glucose (sugar) in food enters the bloodstream more slowly, which may improve blood sugar control.
- » Fiber rich foods often cause you to feel fuller longer which may help you manage your weight.
- » Fiber is broken down in the colon (the main part of the large intestine) by bacteria and the simple organic acids that are produced help to nourish the lining of the colon.
- » These acids also provide fuel for the rest of the body, especially the liver, and may have an important role in metabolism.
- » Fiber keeps stool soft and keeps the contents of the intestines moving.

Two Main Types of Fiber

Soluble Fiber	Insoluble Fiber
<i>Lowers blood cholesterol and blood sugar levels</i>	<i>Increases the movement of materials through digestive tract</i>
Oatmeal Oatbran Legumes (<i>dried peas, beans, lentils, etc.</i>) Apples Pears Strawberries Blueberries	Whole grains (<i>whole wheat breads, barley, couscous, brown rice, bulgur</i>) Whole-grain breakfast cereals Seeds Carrots Cucumbers Zucchini Celery

