

Fabulous Fiber

Unveiling the Mystery

Fiber and Your Bottom Line

Pardon the suggestion, but we usually think about our bowel movements when we think about fiber. However, what you may not realize is that fiber has benefits far beyond the bathroom. Exploring the benefits of fiber requires we understand the what, where and how of this occasionally confusing component of food.

The What...

Fiber is the part of the plant our bodies do not digest. Fiber is a carbohydrate, and is divided into two main types.



Soluble Fiber partially dissolves in water, and forms a gel-like substance in your gut. It can help slow the absorption of food, promote fullness, and bowel regularity.



Insoluble Fiber does not dissolve in your gut. This fiber promotes soft, bulky stool, promotes regular timing of bowel movements, and can lessen the pressure on your bowel wall.

The Where...

Heart Health

People who regularly eat a high fiber diet have a 40% lower risk of developing heart disease compared to those with a low intake of fiber. This could be due to fiber's ability to help control metabolic syndrome (a condition which includes having high blood pressure, excess weight, elevated blood sugar levels, and undesirable cholesterol levels). Whatever the case may be, fiber is a heart healthy food to include.

Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is caused when the body does not produce enough insulin or cannot use insulin properly. High fiber foods help keep blood sugar levels consistent throughout the day, unlike white flour products or high sugar foods, by limiting irregular spikes in blood sugar. Several studies, which included over 700,000 men and women, found that eating 2 extra servings of whole grains a day decreased the risk of type 2 diabetes by 21%.

Digestive Regularity

Fiber plays a role in the management of intestinal health. Generally, a diet that meets your recommended intake of fiber may help relieve constipation and diarrhea.

Older adults, or those who lead less active lives, often complain of constipation. *Gradually* adding fiber can effectively relieve constipation (particularly fiber from bran and oat bran). Symptoms of diarrhea may also improve with a gradual increase in your fiber intake by adding bulk to stool, and slowing the passing of stool through your intestinal track.

**Always make sure you know what the cause of your discomfort is, and drink plenty of water (at least 8 cups a day) to avoid making the problem worse!*

Weight Loss

A fiber rich diet can help you feel fuller, longer. High fiber foods take more time for our body to digest, and therefore, may keep you satisfied between meals; unlike foods high sugar or more refined food choices.

Get started by loading up on whole grains (whole wheat, corn or oats) and voluminous vegetables (*salads, broccoli, cauliflower, and dark green vegetables*) is a great way to start increasing your fiber intake while regulating calories.

The How...

- Adults should shoot for about 25g a day of fiber. (Women: 21g, Men: 30g)
- Read the ingredients list on food labels. Grain based products should have a Whole Grain listed first!
- A good source of fiber is one with anywhere from 2g- 5g of dietary fiber per serving. (read your food label)
- Fiber supplements can also help, but it's best to get fiber from the foods that you eat!