

FitFacts®

Fitting in Fiber

FIBER IS A SUBSTANCE FOUND IN PLANT FOODS. MOST PEOPLE EAT MUCH LESS THAN THE RECOMMENDED 25-35 GRAMS OF FIBER PER DAY. BUT GETTING ENOUGH DIETARY FIBER IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT DOES ALL OF THE FOLLOWING

- “Cleans out” the intestines and promotes digestive health
- Lowers bad (LDL) cholesterol
- Lowers blood sugar
- Increases feeling of fullness after a meal and slower emptying of the stomach, which both curb overeating
- Lowers risk for diseases like heart attack, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers

Here are some recommendations for fitting enough fiber into your day:

- **Go slow.** Surprising your digestive tract with more fiber than it is used to can lead to an upset stomach. Start increasing your fiber intake by a few grams per day until you work up to your goal.
- **Start your day off right.** Oatmeal and high-fiber, whole grain breakfast cereals are some of the best sources of soluble fiber. Add dried fruit or nuts for some texture and additional fiber.
- **Consider your sources.** Some of the best sources of fiber are lentils, split peas, and beans (specifically pinto, black, and navy beans)
- **Go with the grain.** Refined grains and processed foods have been stripped of fiber during processing. Skip the white rice, pasta, and flour and choose the 100% whole grain or 100% whole wheat options instead. Barley, bulgur, and bran are also rich in fiber.
 - **Grain tip #1: Sneak fiber into your recipes.** Add crushed bran cereal, unprocessed wheat bran, or ground flaxseed to baked products such as meatloaf, muffins, casseroles, cakes, and cookies. Use bran products as a crunchy topping for casseroles, salads, or cooked vegetables.
 - **Grain tip #2: Bake with whole grain flours.** Substitute whole grain flour for half or all of the white flour when baking bread. Since it is heavier, use a bit more yeast or let the dough rise longer. When using a recipe with baking powder, increase it by 1 teaspoon for every 3 cups of whole grain flour.
- **Veg out.** Vegetables (and fruits!) are an excellent source of fiber. Leave the skin on (when appropriate, of course) to get the most nutritional bang for your buck.
- **Make snacks count.** Munch on fruits, vegetables, low-fat popcorn, and whole-grain crackers between meals for an extra dose of fiber in your day.



- **Supplement if needed.** Though the best way to get fiber is from your diet, a supplement can be helpful if you aren't able to reach your goal. Check with your health care provider to see if this is right for you.
- **Remember to stay hydrated.** Fiber absorbs water, so when you increase your fiber intake, it is important to drink more water as well.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

[U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)