

Nutrition Matters

Nutrition Services, Community and Health Services

Incredible edible fibre... It does more than just keep you regular!

What is dietary fibre?

Dietary fibre is the part of plant foods we cannot digest. Fibre can be found only in foods of plant origin: grains, cereals, fruit, vegetables, legumes (beans, peas, lentils), nuts and seeds. Meat, fish, milk and milk products do not contain dietary fibre.

Is all dietary fibre the same?

No. There are different kinds of fibre, each having different health benefits. The two main types of fibre are **soluble** and **insoluble**. All plants contain both soluble and insoluble fibres; some foods have more of one than the other.

Insoluble fibre

- This type of fibre is best known for its effect on keeping bowels regular and preventing constipation.
- It is mostly found in wheat bran, whole grain breads and cereals, flax seed, some vegetables and the skins of fruits.

Soluble fibre

- This type of fibre helps reduce blood cholesterol, and slows down the rate that glucose (sugar) enters the blood.
- It is mostly found in oat bran, oatmeal, barley, psyllium (found in *All Bran Buds*TM cereal),

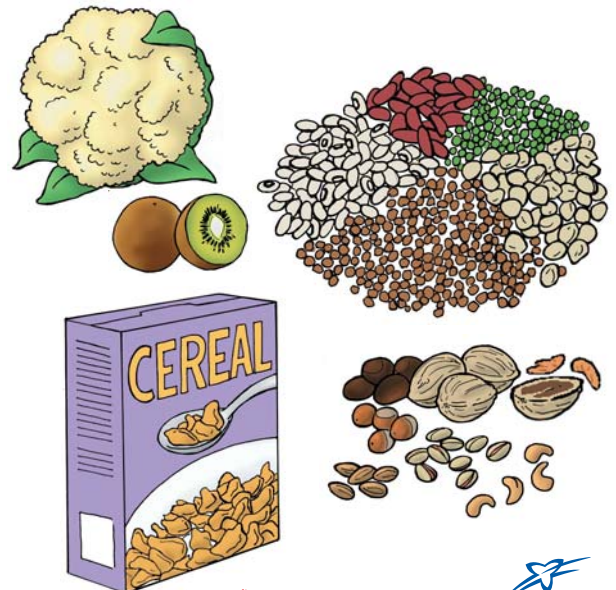
legumes (peas, beans, lentils) and some vegetables and fruit.

What else can fibre do for me?

In addition to helping with bowel regularity, dietary fibre provides many other benefits to your health. Studies show that a diet high in dietary fibre can help to reduce the risk for high blood cholesterol, therefore reducing the risk for heart disease.

High fibre foods also fill you up. This may help with appetite and weight control.

Some studies also indicate that fibre may help to reduce the risk for diseases such as type 2 diabetes, diverticular disease, and some forms of cancer, such as colon cancer. However, more research in this area is still required.

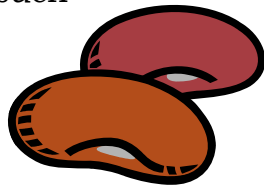


How much fibre do I need?

Age (years)	Males (grams/day)	Females (grams/day)
1-3	19	19
4-8	25	25
9-13	31	26
14-18	38	25
19-50	38	25
Over 50	30	21
Pregnancy		28
Breastfeeding		29

How can I boost my fibre intake?

- Slowly increase your fibre intake to give your body a chance to get used to it. Too much too soon can cause bloating, gas, and a feeling of discomfort
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Fluids help your body use fibre properly, prevent constipation, bloating and gas
- Eat a variety of high-fibre foods. This ensures that you will be getting both soluble and insoluble fibre
- Choose whole grain breads and cereals every day
- Enjoy a variety of vegetables and fruit with the skins whenever possible
- Make legumes such as chick peas, beans and lentils part of your regular meals
- Start your day with a high-fibre cereal. Top off your cereal with some fresh fruit like blueberries or sliced banana
- Increase the fibre content of your snacks. Sprinkle a high-fibre



cereal or ground flax seed on low-fat yogurt

- Snack on high-fibre foods like raw vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds

Look at the label when grocery shopping!

Look for the fibre content on food packages.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 125 mL (87 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 80	
Fat 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Carbohydrate 18 g	6 %
Fibre 2 g	8 %
Sugars 2 g	
Protein 3 g	
Vitamin A 2 %	Vitamin C 10 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 2 %

This Nutrition Facts food label indicates that the product contains two grams of fibre per serving (the serving size is listed as 125mL or 87 grams). This amount of fibre only meets about 8% of the average person's daily recommended intake. In other words, the product contains a small amount of fibre.

When the fibre content is highlighted on a food label (e.g., "Source of fibre"), it must meet government guidelines to describe the product as follows:

- **"Source"** means the product contains at least two grams of dietary fibre per serving
- **"Good source" or "High source"** means the product contains at

least four grams of dietary fibre per serving

- **"Very high source"** means the product contains at least six grams of dietary fibre per serving

Read the label and ensure that the ingredient list says "whole grain whole wheat flour" versus "wheat flour". "Wheat flour" does not mean that it is whole grain. Many products are a combination of the two. Choose products that are 100% whole grain.

BEWARE: Products such as rye and pumpernickel bread are not considered whole grain because they are made with mainly enriched white flour. The brown colour is mostly from caramel or another food colouring. Some whole grain rye is available, but most are made with white flour.



Other Fibre Fiction

Crispness is no indicator of the fibre levels in foods. Salad vegetables such as iceberg lettuce and cucumbers, although crisp, are not necessarily high in fibre. The "crunch" comes from the amount of water in the food, not fibre.

Cooking does not destroy fibre. Peeling removes some fibre because the skin often contains the most fibre.

Here are examples of common foods that contain fibre.

Fibre Content of Common Foods

More than 6 grams fibre - a very high source	
High fibre bran cereal (check the label)	3/4 cup
Cooked legumes (dried peas, beans, lentils)	1 cup
Barley, cooked	1 cup
Dried dates	4 large
4-6 grams fibre - a good or high source	
Buckwheat (kasha)	1 cup
Oat-bran muffin	1 medium
Pear with skin	1 medium
Green peas, lima beans	1/2 cup
Sweet potatoes	1/2 cup
Figs, dried	5
Prunes	7
Dried Apricots	8
Raspberries	1/2 cup
2-4 grams fibre - a source	
Whole wheat, multigrain bread	1 slice
Whole wheat pita bread	1 small
Brown rice	1 cup
Baked potato with skin	1 medium
Pasta, whole wheat	1 cup
Nuts (almonds, walnuts, peanuts)	1/4 cup
Peanut butter	2 tbsp.
Sesame seeds	2 tbsp.
Most vegetables	1 cup
Orange	1 medium
Tangerine	1 medium
Banana, peach, nectarine, kiwi	1 medium
Strawberries	1 cup
Apple with skin	1 medium

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service 2003. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 16. Nutrient Data Laboratory Home page, <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp>

An example of a “high-fibre” day

It may sound difficult to meet your fibre requirements for the day. Here is an example of a “high-fibre” day that can show you how easy it can be.

Breakfast

Grams of Fibre

¾ cup Bran Flakes	5.0
1 tbsp flaxseed	3.4
½ cup blueberries	1.7
1 cup milk	0
1 slice whole wheat bread	2
1 tbsp peanut butter	1
½ cup orange juice	0.3



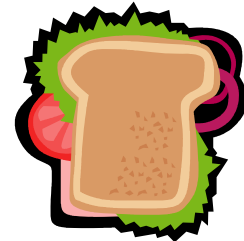
Morning Snack

1 low fat yogurt	0
¼ cup walnuts	2



Lunch

Tuna sandwich	
Tuna	0
2 slices whole wheat bread	4
1/2 tomato, sliced	0.7
10 baby carrots	1.8



Afternoon snack

1 pear	5.1
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Dinner

1 cup brown rice	3.5
Grilled chicken breast	0
1/2 cup steamed broccoli	2.6
1 orange	3.1



Evening Snack

1 cup milk	0
4 gingersnap cookies	0.6
1 medium banana	3.1



Total **39.9**