

Windhorse Naturopathic Clinic

Dietary Fiber

Fiber is the indigestible part of plant foods that our bodies need for optimal digestion, peristalsis, and for the synthesis of beneficial bacteria. The two main types of fiber are soluble and insoluble. Both types of fiber are important for different reasons.

Fiber has long been linked to better health, and that is because fiber and gut microbiota are interconnected. Adding more fiber to the diet can initiate a shift from a microbial profile linked to obesity and chronic health problems to one correlated with a leaner physique and generally overall better health.. Research shows that when gut microbes are starved of fiber, they can start to feed on the protective mucus lining of the gut, possibly triggering inflammation and disease.

Beneficial microbes in the gut feast on fermentable fiber. Helping to fuel your body's self made bacteria is so important because your consumed fibers are able to resist digestion by human-made enzymes as they travel down the digestive tract. Probiotic capsules often fail at this.

When fiber arrives in the large intestine relatively intact it is ready to be devoured by our gut bacteria. The bacteria then extract the fiber's extra energy, nutrients and vitamins for us! Short-chain fatty acids obtained from fiber are of particular interest, as they have been linked to improved immune function, decreased inflammation and protection against obesity.

Soluble fibers are commonly found in fruits (especially pear, apple, and citrus fruits), grains, seeds and legumes. These water-soluble fibers form gels within the digestive tract, and provide beneficial health effects including, contributing to feelings of fullness and decreased appetite, slowing the absorption of carbohydrates which can reduce blood sugar and helping to lower blood cholesterol and triglycerides. Soluble fiber helps to add moisture to and “bulk up” the stools.

Insoluble fibers are commonly found in brans of all types, whole grain breads and cereals, as well as vegetables. The main beneficial effect of this type of fiber is in facilitating the movement of food through the digestive tract, thus preventing constipation.

Constipation is multi-factorial. It is not as simple as “just add more fiber.” Sometimes it is the kind of fiber that is lacking, or in need of adjustment.

Tips for increasing fiber in your diet:

Breakfast

Choose WHOLE GRAIN breakfast cereals, (hot or cold), that contain a minimum of 5 grams of fiber per serving.

Add fresh flax meal, or other seeds such as hemp, chia, sunflower, pumpkin or sunflower to your yogurt or cereal. This gives an added protein boost too.

Add high fiber fruit like an apple, pear, orange, or berries.

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Lunch

Choose 100% whole grain bread or crackers with a minimum of 3-5 grams of fiber per slice. There are some wonderfully seedy crackers on the shelves at the market.

Add fresh cut up vegetables to lunches – carrots, celery, peppers, broccoli, and cauliflower.

Dip those veggies in hummus. Beans have a perfect balance of fibers!

Add a piece of fruit.

Dinner

For the pasta eaters, add garbanzo or cannellini beans to your tomato sauce. Pasta Fagioli!

For burger people, you can add some oatmeal into the ground meat.

Salad at dinner – choose dark green lettuces, spinach, or arugula. Add seeds to the top of your salad. Try a raw kale caesar salad!

Steer away from white/red potatoes, and emphasize whole grains such as brown rice, millet, or quinoa or baked winter squash or sweet potatoes.

Steam or sauté a green vegetable to go along with dinner, such as broccoli, kale, or bok choy.

Snacks

Try hummus or black bean dips with raw vegetables for a satisfying fiber-filled snack.

Choose crackers with a minimum of 2-3 grams of fiber per serving.

Add nut butter to an apple or pear.

Have a handful nuts (best to get raw nuts to decrease oxidation/rancidity and try to avoid peanuts due to mold) or seeds with some dried fruit.

Food Sources of Fiber				
Food	Serving Size	Total Fiber (grams)	Soluble fiber (grams)	Insoluble fiber (grams)
FRUIT				

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Apple, with skin	1 medium	5.7	4.2	1.5
Apricots	4 medium	3.5	1.8	1.7
Banana	1 medium	2.8	2.1	.7
Pear, with skin	1 medium	4.1	0.8	3.2
Grapefruit	½ of a large	3.1	2.4	0.7
Kiwi	1 large	3.2	2.4	0.8
Orange	1 medium	3.2	2.1	1.1
Prunes	4 prunes	3.1	1.3	1.8
Plums	2 medium	2.2	1.2	1.0
Raspberries	½ cup	3.2	0.9	2.3
Blackberries	½ cup	3.8	3.1	0.7
Strawberries	1 cup	4.4	1.8	2.6
Figs	3 medium	5.3	3.0	2.3
VEGETABLES				
Asparagus	½ cup	2.8	1.7	1.1
Broccoli, raw	½ cup	2.6	0.3	2.3
Brussel sprouts, cooked	1 cup	3.2	1.1	2.1
Carrots	1 medium	2.6	1.1	1.5
Corn	½ cup	3.0		
Potato, baked with skin	1 medium	4.4	1.1	3.3
Spinach, cooked	½ cup	2.2	0.7	1.5
zucchini	½ cup	2.6	1.4	1.2
Tomato with skin	1 medium	1.3	.3	1.0
Sweet potato peels	1 medium	4.9	2.7	2.2
Squash, summer cooked	½ cup	2.5	1.3	1.2
Edamame	½ cup	4.9	2.7	2.2
Kale cooked	1 cup	7.2	2.1	5.1
Green beans, cooked	½ cup	2.0	0.8	1.2
Artichoke	1 medium	6.5	4.7	1.8
BEANS, LEGUMES, NUTS and SEEDS				
Black beans, cooked	½ cup	6.9	3.8	3.1
Garbanzo beans, cooked	½ cup	4.0	1.2	2.8
Green peas, cooked	½ cup	4.4	3.2	1.2
Kidney beans, cooked	½ cup	5.7	2.3	3.4
Lentils, cooked	1/2 cup	6.6	2.8	3.8
split peas	½ cup	3.5	1.1	2.4
Lima beans, cooked	½ cup	4.3	2.1	2.2

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Pinto beans, cooked	½ cup	7.4	5.5	1.9
Peanut butter, chunky	2 tbsp	2.6	0.7	1.9
Peanuts, roasted dry	1 ounce	2.3	1.1	1.2
Psyllium seeds, ground	2 tbsp	8	7.1	0.9
Almonds	1 ounce	4.2	.7	3.5
Walnuts	1 ounce	3.1	0.6	2.5
Flax seeds	2 table	4.8	2.7	2.1
Sesame seeds	¼ seeds	3.3	.7	2.6
Sunflower seeds	¼ cup	3.0	1.1	1.9
WHOLE GRAINS				
Barley, cooked	½ cup	4.2	3.3	0.9
Bran flake cereal	¾ cup	5.3		
Brown rice, cooked	½ cup	1.8	0.2	1.6
English muffin, whole wheat	1	4.4	1.3	3.1
Rolled oats, cooked	1 cup	4.0	2.4	1.6
Whole-wheat bread	1 slice	1.9	1.6	0.3
whole grain bread	1 slice	2.9	2.8	0.1
Rye bread	1 slice	2.7	1.9	0.8
Wheat germ	3 tablespoon	2.7	1.9	0.8
Whole grain pasta	1 cup	6.3	4.1	2.2
Oatbran cooked	¾ cup	4.0	2.2	1.8
Quinoa	½ cup	4.2	1.7	2.5
Popcorn	3 cups	3.6	3.2	0.4