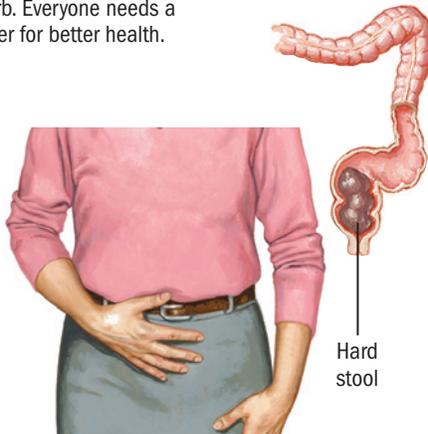


MANAGING YOUR DIETARY FIBER



Dietary fiber, is the part of plant foods that the body can't digest or absorb. Everyone needs a good supply of dietary fiber for better health.

Insoluble fiber (won't dissolve in water) helps material move through the digestive system. It's good for people with constipation or irregular stools. Soluble fiber (dissolves in water) helps lower blood cholesterol and glucose levels.

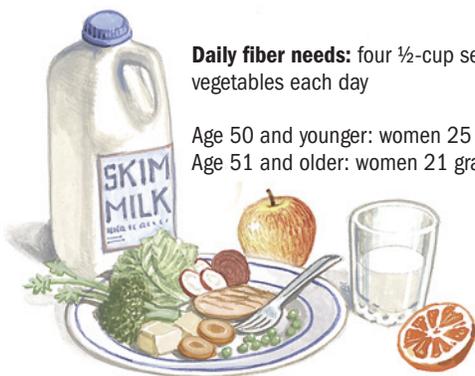


High-fiber foods include nuts, brown rice, certain cereals, whole wheat bread, raspberries, blackberries, pears, figs, acorn squash, carrots, okra, corn, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, broccoli, and beans.



Daily fiber needs: four ½-cup servings of fruits or vegetables each day

Age 50 and younger: women 25 grams, men 38 grams
Age 51 and older: women 21 grams, men 30 grams



What Is Dietary Fiber?

Dietary fiber, also called roughage or bulk, is the part of plant foods that the body cannot digest or absorb. It passes unchanged through the stomach and small intestine and into the colon. The two kinds of fiber are those that don't dissolve in water (insoluble) and those that do (soluble).

What Does Dietary Fiber Do?

Insoluble fiber helps material move through the digestive system and increases the size of stools (bowel movements). It's good for people with constipation or irregular stools. Soluble fiber dissolves in water to become a gel-like material. It can help lower blood cholesterol and sugar (glucose) levels.

Which Foods Are High in Fiber?

High-fiber foods include nuts, brown rice, certain cereals, whole wheat bread, raspberries, blackberries, pears, figs, acorn squash, carrots, okra, corn, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, broccoli, and beans. Whole wheat flour, wheat bran, nuts, and many vegetables are good sources of insoluble fiber. Oats, peas, beans, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, barley, and psyllium have soluble fiber.

How Much Fiber Is Needed?

Fiber needs change with age. Women 50 years old and younger should aim for 25 grams (about 5 tablespoons) of fiber daily. Men of that age need 38 grams daily. Older women (51 years old and older) need 21 grams. Men of that age should have 30 grams daily. The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends eating at least nine servings (four ½ cups) of fiber-filled fruits and vegetables each day.

Dietary fiber helps your digestion, glucose and insulin control, blood cholesterol levels, and weight loss. It may reduce risks of heart disease, cancer, hemorrhoids and irritable bowel syndrome. It can prevent constipation, diarrhea, and colon diverticula.



Eat more beans and whole grains. Eat fruit at every meal. Good examples are apples, bananas, oranges, pears, and berries.



Drink enough water (six to eight glasses daily).



Eat healthy snacks. Choose fresh and dried fruits, raw vegetables, low-fat popcorn, and whole-grain crackers.

Don't eat refined or processed foods or peel the skin off of fruits and vegetables. Don't eat too much fiber. Adding too much too quickly can cause gas, bloating, and cramping.



How Does Dietary Fiber Affect Health and Disease?

Dietary fiber has many health benefits, including better digestive health and better glucose and insulin control. It lowers blood cholesterol levels and may reduce the risks of heart disease and cancer. It can help weight loss and leads to better weight control. It can prevent constipation, diarrhea, and diverticula (small pouches) in the colon. A high-fiber diet may lower the risk of certain disorders such as hemorrhoids and irritable bowel syndrome.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Dietary Fiber:

- ✓ **DO** drink lots of water. Fiber works best when it absorbs water and makes your stool soft and bulky. Without the added water, you could become constipated.
- ✓ **DO** get all the fiber from your fruits and vegetables by leaving peels on. If you worry about dirt and pesticides, rinse your produce in warm water before you eat it. Remember, whole foods have more fiber than juices do.
- ✓ **DO** eat more beans, peas, and lentils. Eat more whole grains and whole-grain products.
- ✓ **DO** eat fruit at every meal. Good examples are apples, bananas, oranges, pears, and berries.
- ✓ **DO** eat healthy snacks. Fresh and dried fruits, raw vegetables, low-fat popcorn, and whole-grain crackers are good choices.
- ⊗ **DON'T** eat refined or processed foods such as fruit juice, white bread, pasta, and non-whole-grain cereals. They don't have enough fiber. Also, don't peel the skin off of fruits and vegetables. Peeling takes away the fiber.
- ⊗ **DON'T** eat too much fiber. Adding too much fiber too quickly can cause gas, bloating, and cramping. Increase fiber in your diet slowly over a few weeks to let your body adjust.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

• National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse

E-mail: nddic@aerie.com

Website: <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/digest/nddic.htm>

• American College of Gastroenterology

Tel: (703) 820-7400

Website: <http://www.acg.gi.org>