



# Filling up on Fiber

The importance of dietary fiber continues to make the news and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans advocate the health benefits of high fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes. If you're like most Americans, you're probably not getting enough dietary fiber for good health. The recommended dietary fiber intake is 14 grams per 1,000 calories.

## Fiber-What is it?

Found only in plants, fiber is the part of the plant that cannot be digested by the body. There are several different types of fiber, but they are commonly separated into two major classes - soluble and insoluble. You need to include both types of fiber in your diet for good health. While some foods are a particularly good source of either soluble or insoluble fiber, such as those listed in the box below, most fiber-rich foods contain both types.

### Some Good Sources of Soluble Fiber

- Dried or canned beans and peas
- Oats and barley
- Apples, oranges, carrots, potatoes, and squash

### Some Good Sources of Insoluble Fiber

- 100% whole wheat products (bread, crackers, cereals)
- Wheat and corn bran
- Many fruits and vegetables, especially strawberries, bananas, pears, potatoes, green beans, broccoli, and peppers (include the skins of fruits and root vegetables like potatoes to increase dietary fiber)



## The Healthful Benefits of Fiber

Soluble and insoluble fibers play different, yet equally important, roles. When making your food choices, don't worry too much about which fiber is which; just focus on getting enough fiber-rich foods in your diet overall.

Several studies have found that when combined with a low-fat diet, soluble fiber can help decrease your risk of heart disease. Soluble fiber may also help the body regulate blood glucose levels in some people with diabetes.

Insoluble fiber has health benefits too. Insoluble fiber helps move waste through the digestive system, adding bulk and softness to stools and helping to promote regularity and prevent constipation, hemorrhoids, and other intestinal problems.

## Watching Your Waistline

In combination with a low-fat diet and exercise, getting enough fiber in your diet can also be helpful in managing weight. High-fiber foods tend to be lower in calories. They help fill you up and keep you feeling full longer, so you're less likely to be hungry too soon.

## Fiber Boosting Tips

When choosing bread or cereal, look for the words “whole grain,” “whole grain oat,” “whole grain wheat” or “100% whole wheat” on the ingredient list.

It should be the first ingredient listed. Bread labeled wheat bread is not necessarily whole grain and therefore may not have as much fiber as other brands. Look for foods marked “high” or “good” source of fiber. At breakfast, top toast with preserves or fruit spreads instead of butter or margarine to trim calories.



Check the Nutrition Facts panel to see how your favorite cereal stacks up on the fiber front. Foods that contain at least 2.5 grams of fiber per serving are a “good” source of fiber; those with five grams or more are considered “high” in fiber.

Choose whole or cut up fruits and vegetables instead of their juice to increase fiber.

Include more beans and peas in your diet, such as black bean chili, pea soup, or chickpeas (garbanzo beans) tossed into your salad. Beans and peas are low in fat and high in protein and fiber, making them a great choice for a healthy diet.

Don't peel away the peel. That's where a lot of the fiber is found, as well as vitamins and minerals. Eat the whole fruit or vegetable.

Add beans or peas, grains like brown rice, whole-wheat pasta or bulgur, vegetables, and fruits to salads, soups, stews, casseroles, muffins, breads, and other baked goods.

Fresh and dried fruits and shredded veggies like zucchini add a delicious flavor and texture to breads and muffins.

Top low-fat ice cream or angel food cake with pureed fruit and a few teaspoons of sugar.

If your cereal is low in fiber, try mixing it with another high fiber, whole grain



cereal to boost fiber content. Top cereal with fruit to add even more fiber.

Experiment with more unfamiliar (but easy and delicious) grains such as barley, buckwheat, couscous, and quinoa.

Puree vegetables in a blender to thicken hot soups or blend fruit with yogurt and a few teaspoons of sugar to make tasty.



## A Helpful Hint

Increase fiber-rich foods in your diet gradually, since your intestines need time to adjust to the added fiber load. If you add it too quickly, you may experience gas, diarrhea, cramps and bloating. Be sure to drink plenty of water and other fluids to help fiber do its job properly.

## Making Good Foods Taste Great

Making sure that fruits, vegetables, whole grains and other fiber-rich foods, and calcium-rich dairy products are the centerpieces of your diet is important dietary advice. To help make high fiber foods more appealing, add a little bit of sugar. A bowl of nutrient and fiber-rich homemade oatmeal tastes great with a couple of teaspoons of brown sugar.

Sweet foods and beverages that don't contribute nutrients should be thought of as treats. But, just because a food contains sugar does not make it unhealthy.

It is important to evaluate a food or beverage for its total nutrient content and how it will contribute to a healthy diet that stays within your caloric needs. Remember, sugar is all natural and has just 15 calories per teaspoon and has contributed flavor, safety, as a preservative, and other essential functional properties in our food supply for centuries.

### Chicken and Vegetable Couscous

Yield: 6 servings

- 3 3-oz boneless chicken breasts
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- ½ cup scallions, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 ¼ cup tomato sauce
- ¼ cup water
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 ¼ cups carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 large potato, peeled and cut in cubes
- 1 yellow squash, chopped
- ¼ cup red pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- ¾ tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 3-4 drops hot sauce
- ¼ cup raisins
- 1 cup canned small white beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup dry couscous, dry
- 1 ½ cups water

Cut chicken into three-inch cubes and brown in oil on medium heat. Add garlic and scallions and sauté for one minute. Stir in tomato sauce and ¼ cup water. Add remaining ingredients except for couscous and water. Bring to simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, bring remaining 1 ½ cups water to boil, add couscous, cover, and remove from heat. Let stand for five minutes. Serve chicken and vegetables over couscous.

#### Nutrition Information per Serving

**Calories: 320**  
**Total Fat: 7 grams**  
**Total Carbohydrates: 52 grams**  
**Sugars: 11 grams**  
**Dietary Fiber: 7grams**  
**Protein: 17 grams**  
**Sodium: 500 mg**

### Spinach and Chickpea Salad

Yield: 4 servings

- 2 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp water
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 tsp white granulated sugar
- 3 cups spinach
- 2 carrots, chopped in circles
- 1 cup canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 ½ Tbsp sesame seeds

In small bowl, mix vinegar, water, oil, soy sauce, and sugar to make dressing. In salad bowl, toss dressing with spinach, carrots, and chickpeas. Sprinkle with sesame seeds.

### Apple Bulgur Salad

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 cup bulgur, dry
- 1 ¾ cups low sodium chicken broth
- 4 cups parsley
- 1 large apple with peel
- 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 Tbsp water
- 2 tsp white granulated sugar
- 2 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- ¼ tsp oregano flakes

Bring broth to boil. In medium bowl, add bulgur and pour broth over. Stir and let stand for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, chop parsley finely and chop apple into two-inch cubes. In small bowl or mini food processor, mix remaining ingredients to make dressing. Stir apples, parsley, and dressing into bulgur. Serve immediately or chill in refrigerator.



#### Nutrition Information Per Serving

**Calories: 250**  
**Total Fat: 9 grams**  
**Dietary Fiber: 9 grams**  
**Total Carbohydrates: 40 grams**  
**Sugars: 8 grams**  
**Protein: 8 grams**  
**Sodium: 100mg**

#### Nutrition Information per Serving

**Calories: 120**  
**Total Fat: 4 grams**  
**Total Carbohydrates: 19 grams**  
**Sugars: 3 grams**  
**Dietary Fiber: 6 grams**  
**Protein: 5 grams**  
**Sodium: 220mg**

### Gazpacho

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 cucumber, not peeled
- ½ red pepper, seeded
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 carrots
- ¼ cup scallions, chopped
- 1 medium tomato
- 2 cups spicy tomato juice
- 2 tsp white granulated sugar
- 3 Tbsp. Vinegar
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup tomato sauce
- 15-oz. can navy beans, drained and rinsed

Chop all vegetables into big chunks. Add all ingredients except beans to food processor and process to make chunky puree. Stir in beans and chill until serving.

#### Nutrition Information per Serving

Calories: 150

Total Fat: 0.5 grams

Total Carbohydrates: 30 grams

Sugars: 9 grams

Dietary Fiber: 7 grams

Protein: 8 grams

Sodium: 420mg

### Pasta with Tomato Zucchini Pesto

Yield: 4 servings

- 6 oz pasta, uncooked
- 1 package or 1 cup fresh basil, chopped
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp white granulated sugar
- 1 Tbsp Parmesan cheese, grated
- ¼ cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- 1 medium zucchini, cut in circles
- 2 tsp water
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, quartered
- ½ tsp salt (optional)



Prepare pasta as directed on the package. Rinse and drain. Cover and set aside. In food processor or a blender, process basil, oil, garlic, and sugar. Blend in Parmesan and ricotta. Set aside. Place zucchini in large casserole dish and add water. Cover and microwave on high for four minutes. Drain. Stir in pasta and cheese mixture. Garnish with tomatoes. Salt to taste.

#### Nutrition Information per Serving

Calories: 220

Total Fat: 4 grams

Total Carbohydrates: 39 grams

Sugars: 6 grams

Dietary Fiber: 3 grams

Protein: 9 grams

Sodium: 50mg

### Spiced Oranges

Yield: 4 servings

- 4 oranges
- 2 inch piece of orange peel
- ¾ cup water
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 3 Tbsp brown sugar
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- dash ground ginger



Peel and section oranges, reserving two-inch piece peel to add to syrup. Cut orange sections into thirds. Set aside. In non-corrosive medium saucepan, combine remaining ingredients with ¼ cup orange sections and two-inch piece of orange peel. Bring to boil over medium high heat and reduce heat to simmer for two minutes. Strain syrup and pour over remaining orange sections and chill for an hour. To serve, spoon orange sections into bowls topping with a little syrup.

#### Nutrition Information per Serving

Calories: 90

Total Fat: 0 grams

Total Carbohydrates: 24 grams

Sugars: 19 grams

Dietary Fiber: 3 grams

Protein: 1 gram

Sodium: 0mg

### Cantaloupe Strawberry Shake

Yield: 2 servings

- 1 cup whole strawberries
- 1 cup cantaloupe
- 2 tsp white granulated sugar
- ½ cup fat-free milk

Cut fruit in big chunks. Add to food processor with sugar and milk, and blend until frothy. Serve immediately.

#### Nutrition Information per Serving

Calories: 90

Total Fat: 0.5 grams

Total Carbohydrates: 19 grams

Sugars: 18 grams

Dietary Fiber: 2 grams

Protein: 3 grams

Sodium: 40mg

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