

Nutrition for High Fiber

Fiber is a nutrient that we hear a lot about, but what is it and why do we need it? Dietary fiber refers to complex carbohydrates that our body is unable to digest and absorb. Since it isn't digested, you might assume that fiber can't offer us much in terms of health benefits, but that is not the case. In fact, eating a fiber-rich diet may help to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

There are two forms of dietary fiber, soluble and insoluble:

- Insoluble fiber doesn't dissolve in water and helps to promote bowel regularity by adding bulk and softness to stools. It also speeds up the waste removal process within our digestive tract, reducing the time that potentially harmful substances stick around in our intestines. Good sources of insoluble fiber include whole grain products, bran, flaxseeds and fruits and vegetables (with their skin when possible).
- Soluble fiber dissolves in water forming a gel-like substance during digestion. This allows soluble fiber to bind to fatty acids in the body, helping to eliminate them as waste, which may help to lower blood cholesterol levels. In addition, soluble fiber helps to slow the digestion and absorption of sugar in the body which can help to regulate blood sugar levels. Good sources of soluble fiber include oats, fruits, vegetables, beans and legumes.

Most of us fall short on fiber. Men should aim for 38 grams/day and women, 25 grams/day. To increase your daily fiber intake, eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. When it comes to fruits and vegetables, eat them with the skin when possible and limit juice to 4 ounces per day, which has little to no fiber. When grocery shopping, use the food label to choose products with the most fiber per serving. When increasing your fiber intake, make sure to do so gradually to give your body time to adjust and make sure to drink plenty of water.

This medical and/or nutritional information is not intended to be a substitute for individual advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.