



# Fiber Facts:

## Why fiber is important

### Why is fiber important?

Including fiber in your diet is good for your health in lots of ways. It can:

- Reduce the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- Lower the risk of several forms of cancer.
- Improve cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Help regulate your digestion.
- Help you feel fuller, so you may eat less.

### What is fiber?

Fiber is the part of plant foods that our bodies can't digest or absorb. It is found in fruits, vegetables, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

There are 2 kinds of dietary fiber: insoluble and soluble. We benefit from both.

**Soluble fiber** comes from fruit, some vegetables, oats, beans, peas, lentils, and barley. When mixed with liquid, it forms a gel, which helps control blood sugar and reduces cholesterol.

**Insoluble fiber** comes from fruits, grains, and vegetables. It adds bulk and acts like a brush to clean out the colon. It helps food pass through the digestive tract more quickly and prevents constipation.

### What is a whole grain?

A **whole grain** has all three of its original parts:

- The bran (fiber-rich outer layer).
- The endosperm (middle layer).
- The germ (inner layer). Whole grains are rich in nutrients, including fiber.

Whole wheat, oatmeal, rye, cornmeal, bulgur, barley, brown rice, and even popcorn are all whole grains.

A **refined grain** has been milled, so only the middle layer (endosperm) is left. Milling removes much of the vitamins. "Enriched" flour has had some of the nutrients added back, but not the fiber.

### How much fiber do I need?

The American Heart Association recommends between 25 and 38 grams of fiber a day in a well-balanced diet. Since most people only consume about half that amount of fiber, try these suggestions to increase the fiber in your diet.

### Adding more fiber to your diet

- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Try more recipes with beans, peas, barley, lentils, quinoa, bulgur, or brown rice.
- Choose breads, cereals, tortillas, and crackers that list a whole grain as the first ingredient on the label.
- Make at least half of your grain servings whole grains.
- Add fiber to your diet slowly, over 2 to 3 weeks. If you add it too fast, you may feel bloated or have gas pains.
- Unless your doctor has told you not to, drink 6 to 8 cups of water and other fluids a day to aid digestion.
- If you eat wheat bran to keep your bowels moving, start with 1 teaspoon per meal. Increase slowly to 2 to 4 tablespoons a day. If you use psyllium fiber supplements, be

sure to follow the directions and drink enough fluids to remain hydrated.

- Buy unprocessed foods when you can. Food processing often removes fiber.

### Read food labels

Look for the "dietary fiber" content on food labels. Good sources of fiber have at least 10% of the "percent daily value" for fiber. To find whole-grain foods, look for the words whole wheat or whole grain in the ingredient list. "Multigrain," "wheat," and "enriched flour" do not mean whole grain. If you are eating gluten-free foods, be sure to check the label for fiber content.

Amount Per Serving		
<b>Calories</b> 230	Calories from Fat 72	
<b>% Daily Value*</b>		
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>12%</b>	
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>	
Trans Fat 0g		
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>	
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>	
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>12%</b>	
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>16%</b>	
Sugars 1g		
<b>Protein</b> 3g		
Vitamin A	10%	
Vitamin C	8%	
Calcium	20%	
Iron	45%	
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.		
Total Fat	Less than 65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

# Fiber Content of Foods

Vegetables	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Artichoke hearts, cooked	½ cup	5g
* Asparagus, cooked	½ cup	2g
* Avocado	½ cup	6g
Baked potato with skin	1 medium	4g
Beets	½ cup	2g
Broccoli, cooked	½ cup	3g
* Brussel sprouts	½ cup	3g
Cabbage, cooked	½ cup	1g
Carrots, raw	1 medium	2g
Cauliflower, cooked	½ cup	1g
Chinese mustard greens	½ cup	2g
Corn, cooked	½ cup	2g
Eggplant, cooked	½ cup	2g
Fennel, raw/sliced	½ cup	1g
Green beans, cooked	½ cup	2g
Lettuce, Romaine	2 cups	2g
Onions, chopped	½ cup	1g
Peas, cooked	½ cup	4g
Spinach, cooked	½ cup	4g
* Sweet potato, cooked	½ cup	4g
Swiss chard, cooked	½ cup	2g
Tomato, raw	1 medium	2g
Turnips, cooked	½ cup	2g
Zucchini, sliced	½ cup	<1g
Beans and Nuts	Serving size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Almonds	¼ cup	4g
* Black beans, cooked	½ cup	8g
Flaxseed, ground	2 tbs	4g
* Kidney beans	½ cup	8g
Lentils, cooked	½ cup	8g
* Lima beans, cooked	½ cup	7g
* Navy beans, cooked	½ cup	10g
* Peanuts	¼ cup	3g
Pecans, chopped	¼ cup	3g
* Pinto beans, cooked	½ cup	8g
Pistachios	¼ cup	3g
* Soy beans (Edamame)	½ cup	5g

Fruits	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Apple, with peel	1 medium	3g
* Apricots	1 medium	1g
Asian pear	1 medium	4g
Banana	1 medium	3g
Cantaloupe	½ cup	1g
Cherries	10 medium	1g
Figs, raw	1 medium	1g
Honeydew	½ cup	2g
* Mango	1 medium	4g
Nectarine	1 medium	2g
* Orange	1 medium	3g
Papaya	½ cup	1g
Peach, with skin	1 medium	2g
Pear, with skin	1 medium	5g
* Prunes	½ cup	6g
Raisins	½ cup	3g
Raspberries	½ cup	4g
Strawberries, sliced	½ cup	2g
Cereal	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
All Bran (100%) cereal	½ cup	9g
Cheerios	1 cup	4g
Granola	1 cup	3g
Fiber One	½ cup	14g
Raisin Bran	1 cup	7g
Shredded Wheat	1 cup	6g
Wheat bran	2 tbs	3g
Wheaties	1 cup	3g
Grains	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
* Barley, cooked	1 cup	6g
Brown rice, cooked	1 cup	4g
Rice noodles	1 cup	2g
Quinoa, cooked	1 cup	5g
Rye bread	1 slice	2g
Whole-wheat bread	1 slice	3g
Whole-wheat english muffin	1 slice	3g
Whole-wheat pasta, cooked	1 cup	4g

\* High in soluble fiber. Source: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference.

## Additional resources

Visit your doctor's home page at [kp.org/mydoctor](http://kp.org/mydoctor). Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.

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