



Explained:

Health Benefits Of Dietary Fiber

Learn why fiber is an essential dietary component for preventing disease.

Dietary fiber is a non-digestible carbohydrate that originates from plant-based foods.

Many carbohydrates are broken down into sugar molecules, while fiber is not. Instead, it passes through the body undigested.

Dietary fiber is essential for homeostasis within the gut. The predominant health benefits extend to enhanced metabolic welfare, including protection against obesity and related metabolic diseases.





The Problem

Diets have changed radically over the past few decades, with people consuming more ultra-processed foods void of dietary fiber. This lack of focus on the foods we eat has led to deficiencies in dietary fiber.

Women's recommended daily fiber intake is 25 grams, while men should aim for 38 grams. Still, most Americans consume less than half of those recommended minimum levels, which is comparable worldwide.

Because fiber helps regulate the body's use of sugars, helping keep hunger and blood sugar in check, and helping feed the good bacteria responsible for multiple health benefits, it is essential for optimal healthiness and longevity.

People with **high intakes of dietary fiber** appear to have an exceptionally lower risk for developing:

- Coronary heart disease,
- Stroke,
- Hypertension,
- Diabetes,
- Obesity,
- and certain gastrointestinal disorders.



The Solution

We can get good sources of dietary fiber from the food we already eat, and we need to eat more of it.

The best sources of fiber are **nuts, fruits and vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.**

And because high-fiber foods are filling, they may help maintain weight and even aid weight loss. They are also generally a good source of vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients.

There are two varieties of fiber:

- **Soluble Fiber** that dissolves in water and can help lower glucose levels and blood cholesterol. Some foods with soluble fiber include oatmeal, nuts, beans, sunflower seeds, chickpeas, apples and strawberries.
- **Insoluble Fiber** that does not dissolve in water, can help food move through your digestive system, promoting frequency and helping prevent constipation. Some foods with insoluble fibers include wheat, whole wheat bread, whole grain couscous, brown rice, green beans, cauliflower, cucumbers, broccoli and tomatoes.

Top Tips To Increase Fiber Intake:



Avoid drinking fruit juices; eat whole fruits instead.



Substitute white grain rice, bread, and pasta with brown and whole-grain alternatives.



For breakfast, swap ultra-processed cereals for natural foods like chia and almond pudding, eggs on whole-grain toast or oatmeal with fruit.



Snack on fresh and dried fruit and raw vegetables instead of chips or chocolate.



Explore vegetarian meals rich in beans or legumes once or twice per week.



When shopping, challenge yourself to avoid the inner aisle; getting most of your produce from the outer shelves of the supermarket (fresh fruit and vegetables, and frozen fruit and vegetables and other good foods).

Sources & Further Reading

O'Grady J, O'Connor EM, Shanahan F. Review article: dietary fibre in the era of microbiome science. *Aliment Pharmacol Ther.* 2019 Mar;49(5):506-515. doi: 10.1111/apt.15129. PMID: 30746776
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30746776/>

Anderson JW, Baird P, Davis RH Jr, Ferreri S, Knudtson M, Koraym A, Waters V, Williams CL. Health benefits of dietary fiber. *Nutr Rev.* 2009 Apr;67(4):188-205. doi: 10.1111/j.1753-4887.2009.00189.x. PMID: 19335713.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19335713/>

Barber TM, Kabisch S, Pfeiffer AFH, Weickert MO. The Health Benefits of Dietary Fibre. *Nutrients.* 2020;12(10):3209. Published 2020 Oct 21. doi:10.3390/nu12103209
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7589116/>

EB, Ascherio A, Giovannucci E, Spiegelman D, Stampfer MJ, Willett WC. Vegetable, fruit, and cereal fiber intake and risk of coronary heart disease among men. *JAMA.* 1996 Feb 14;275(6):447-51. doi: 10.1001/jama.1996.03530300031036. PMID: 8627965.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8627965/>

MA, O'Reilly E, Augustsson K, Fraser GE, Goldbourt U, Heitmann BL, Hallmans G, Knekt P, Liu S, Pietinen P, Spiegelman D, Stevens J, Virtamo J, Willett WC, Ascherio A. Dietary fiber and risk of coronary heart disease: a pooled analysis of cohort studies. *Arch Intern Med.* 2004 Feb 23;164(4):370-6. doi: 10.1001/archinte.164.4.370. PMID: 14980987.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14980987/>