



the nutrition school

Fiber

Fiber is super important to a healthful diet and often overlooked when considering how to boost nutrition, manage weight and prevent disease. Here's the low down on fiber facts.

What is fiber?

Found only in plant foods (fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts), fiber is an indigestible part of the plant, thus, provides no calories.

Why is fiber good for you?

Consuming adequate fiber may help to:

- Keep you full longer
- Control blood sugar levels
- Lower high cholesterol
- Prevent constipation
- Prevent diverticulosis
- Prevent hemorrhoids
- Prevent certain cancers

What's all this talk of different "types" of fiber?

There are essentially two common types of fiber: soluble and insoluble. They have different roles in your body and you need them both for different reasons.

Soluble Fiber	Insoluble Fiber
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gummy and viscous• Helps lower blood cholesterol and regulate body's use of sugars• Helps regulate blood glucose• Manages diarrhea and symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome• Lowers the risk of getting ulcers of the gastrointestinal tract• May be added to food products for texture and consistency• High amounts found in oat bran, fruits, vegetables, beans and legumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adds bulk and holds water• Helps lower blood cholesterol and prevents development of certain types of cancer• Aids in digestion by helping waste move through the gastrointestinal tract• Prevents constipation by adding bulk and softness to stools• High amounts found in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds and fortified whole grain foods

There is also the lesser known fiber found in prebiotics. Prebiotics are a part of dietary fiber that nourish the beneficial intestinal bacteria found in the gut. While prebiotics can benefit everyone's digestion, they are linked to management of gastrointestinal disorders including IBD. Prebiotics are found in the skin of apples, also bananas, chicory root, onions and beans. If you are working with a client who has dietary restrictions and cannot eat prebiotic rich foods, you may consider recommending a supplement such as Prebiotin.

How much fiber do you need?

Plant foods contain a combination of insoluble and soluble fiber. The average person needs 25–38 grams of total fiber per day. Unfortunately, most of us eat less than 15 grams! A food is considered a good source of fiber if it contains 3 or more grams per serving. You don't need to stress about how much of your fiber is soluble or insoluble, just aim to get 25 grams in for women 50 or younger and 21 grams or more for women over 51. Men require 38 grams under the age of 50 and 30 grams after 51. Unless your client is prescribed a fiber supplement for medical purposes, try to reach fiber goals through food.

A few things to keep in mind...

- If you are not used to eating fiber increase the amount you consume slowly; introduce foods high in fiber in small amounts to avoid gas and diarrhea.
- A very high fiber diet can rob your body of nutrients – don't overdo it!
- Increase your water intake as you increase your intake of fiber rich foods.

Here are some great sources of fiber:

1 cup raspberries	8.0 g
1 cup blackberries	7.6 g
3 prunes	4.7 g
1 small pear with skin	4.3 g
2 dried figs	3.5 g
1 medium orange	3.1 g
1 cup mango	3.0 g
1 small apple with skin	3.0 g
1 kiwi	2.6 g
1 small baked potato with skin	3.6 g
½ cup corn	3.4 g

¼ cup avocado	2.9 g
1 medium carrot	2.3 g
½ cup asparagus	2.0 g
½ cup broccoli	2.0 g
1 small baked sweet potato	2.0 g
1 medium tomato	1.5 g
¼ cup chickpeas	3.5 g
¼ cup kidney beans	2.8 g
¼ cup black beans	2.5 g
¼ cup black-eyed peas	2.0 g
½ cup Nature's Path SmartBran cereal	13.0 g
¼ cup (uncooked) steel-cut oats	8.0 g
½ cup Uncle Sam cereal	5.5 g
½ cup cooked oatmeal	4.0 g
2 tbsp wheat germ	2.1 g
5 GG Scandinavian Bran Crispbreads	15.0 g
5 cups (air-popped) popcorn	5.0 g
2 FiberRich crackers	5.0 g
1 slice 100% whole-grain wheat bread	2.0 – 6.0 g