

# Fill Up With Fiber

## The Scoop on Fiber

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate found in plant-based foods like whole grains, fruits and vegetables, beans and other legumes. It is a vital nutrient that keeps our systems functioning and even prevents chronic diseases and medical risk factors like high cholesterol, heart disease and diabetes. It takes a while for our bodies to process fiber. So foods that have more fiber tend to keep us fuller, longer which can prevent overeating and aid weight control. Unfortunately, most Americans do not consume enough fiber and miss out on all these health benefits.

One recommendation is to consume 14 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories eaten. Adults should aim for 20-35 grams per day.

An easy estimate for kids younger than 18 years old is to add 5 to your age for the recommended amount. For example, a 10-year-old should try to eat 15 grams of fiber each day.

## Where to Find Fiber

Whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes are the best fiber sources. The less processed the better. Try to eat these foods in their most natural state.

When it comes to whole grains, label reading can be tricky. Many food companies market their products as whole grain and high fiber but in reality are not the best sources or are even less nutritious choices. Aim to buy foods with the words whole wheat and whole grain listed first on the ingredients list. If it just says wheat flour, you miss out on the best part of fiber. Remember that the shorter the list, the better.

Typically, foods with 5 grams are considered high in fiber and foods with 2.5-4.9 grams qualify as good sources.



**Louisiana**

### Helpful Hints

As you increase your fiber intake, do it slowly for the sake of your tummy and digestive system. Be sure to drink plenty of water too!

### Think outside the Bread Box

Whole grains don't have to be boring. There are endless possibilities to get your grains other than through whole-wheat bread, brown rice and whole-wheat pasta. Try whole oatmeal, quinoa, bulgur, couscous, kasha, buckwheat, rye, wild rice, whole-grain barley and whole-grain cornmeal.

Bonus – popcorn is a whole grain! Swap out the chips and pretzels and snack on popcorn instead. Just be sure it isn't covered in butter, salt or oil.

### A Few High Fiber Favorites

- ▶ One cup raspberries - 8 grams
- ▶ One medium pear - 5.5 grams
- ▶ One cup cooked peas - 8.8 grams
- ▶ One cup cooked broccoli - 5 grams
- ▶ One cup cooked black beans - 15 grams
- ▶ One cup cooked whole-wheat pasta - 6 grams
- ▶ One cup cooked oatmeal or wheat cereal - 5+ grams

