

DidYouKnow?

Get the Poop on Fiber

You probably have heard it before. Eat more fiber, but do you know why fiber is so good for your health?

- Dietary fiber, found mainly in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes, is best known for preventing or relieving constipation, but it can provide other health benefits as well.

What is dietary fiber?

Also known as roughage or bulk, fiber includes all the parts of plant food that your body can't digest or absorb. Therefore, it passes mostly intact through your stomach and intestines and out of the body. It may sound like fiber doesn't do much, but it plays an important role in maintaining health.

What are the benefits of a high fiber diet?

- **Normalizes bowel movements:** It can be helpful in preventing both constipation and diarrhea.
- **Helps maintain bowel integrity:** It helps prevent hemorrhoids, diverticulitis, and colorectal cancer.
- **Protects against heart disease:** Studies show that it decreases both blood pressure and cholesterol.
- **Helps control blood sugar levels:** It slows the absorption of sugar and reduces the risk of Type-2 diabetes.
- **Aids in weight loss:** High fiber foods are energy dense which means they require more chewing, have fewer calories for the same volume of food, and tend to help you feel fuller and eat less.

How much fiber do you need?

Most health experts agree that women should consume between 21 to 25 grams of fiber daily.

What are the best sources of fiber?

- **Grains and whole-grain products:** One slice of whole wheat bread contains 3 grams of fiber and brown rice has 5 grams.
- **Fruits:** An apple has 4 grams of fiber and a cup of raspberries has 6 grams.
- **Vegetables:** 1 cup of corn has 5 grams of fiber and a baked potato has 4.
- **Beans, peas, and other legumes:** 1 cup of black beans has 9 grams of fiber.
- **Nuts and seeds:** One quarter cup of sliced almonds contains 2.5 grams of fiber.

Tips for making the switch to high fiber.

- **It is better to get your fiber from whole foods than from supplements:** High fiber foods provide vitamins, minerals and other beneficial nutrients that supplements do not.
- **Eat a wide variety of high fiber foods:** The amount and kind of fiber varies from food to food and one needs both soluble and insoluble fiber to get the maximum benefit.
- **Switch gradually to a high fiber diet:** Adding fiber too quickly can cause intestinal gas and abdominal bloating or cramping. It is best to increase fiber in your diet over a period of a few weeks.
- **Drink plenty of water:** Fiber works best when it absorbs water.