

How to Eat More Fiber

What is fiber?

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate (a nutrient that gives your body energy) that the body can't digest. Fiber is found in many different types of foods, including:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Beans and legumes
- Whole grain foods
- Nuts and seeds

Why is fiber important?

- It helps give our intestines the energy they need to work properly.
- It helps us feel full after a meal.
- It helps to feed and maintain healthy bacteria in our gut.
- It protects the mucus layer of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract.
- It helps you have regular bowel movements.

How much fiber should I eat in a day?

How much fiber you should eat each day depends on your age and gender:

- Men 50 years and younger: 38 grams (g) fiber per day
- Men 51 years and older: 30 g fiber per day
- Women 50 years and younger: 25 g fiber per day
- Women 51 years and older: 21 g fiber per day

For more information on the fiber content of foods, visit this website or scan the QR code:

www.DietaryGuidelines.gov/resources/2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-online-materials/food-sources-select-nutrients/food-0



What are the different types of fiber?

The 2 main types of fiber are soluble and insoluble fiber.

- **Soluble fiber** dissolves in water, so it forms into a gel during digestion. This helps slow down food that travels through the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, which slows down digestion. Soluble fiber helps with both diarrhea and constipation.
- **Insoluble fiber** does not dissolve in water. It passes through our intestines mostly intact, so it helps clean out the digestive tract. Insoluble fiber helps with constipation.

How can I start to eat more fiber?

Fiber should be slowly added into meals and snacks to help make it easy to digest. A good way to do this is with a 3-part approach (described below). Each part of this process is called a phase.

Phase 1: Following a low fiber diet

A **low fiber diet** does not remove fiber from your diet, but changes the type and form of fiber that you are eating. If you're experiencing active gut inflammation, bad diarrhea, or diverticulitis, we recommend that you focus on eating soluble fiber. Since soluble fiber acts like a sponge, it slows down food moving through your digestive tract and it is less irritating to your colon.

Here are some foods you can eat on a low fiber diet:










Fruits	Vegetables
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apples (peeled, baked, or applesauce)• Apricots (ripe)• Avocado• Bananas• Canned peaches or mandarins• Cantaloupe	<p>Cook these vegetables until they are “fork-tender” (soft enough to be cut with a fork):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asparagus (eat the tips only)• Bok choy• Carrots• Eggplant (without the skin)







Fruits	Vegetables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citrus like oranges, grapefruits, etc. (without the thin white skin) • Honeydew • Mango (ripe) • Papaya • Peaches, nectarines, or plums (without the skin) • Pear (without the skin) • Watermelon (without seeds) • Small amounts of fruits juices (watered down, without pulp) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green beans • Parsnips (without the skin) • Potato (without the skin) • Sweet potato (without the skin) • Yellow squash (without the seeds) <p>Eat these vegetables raw:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arugula • Bibb, butterleaf, or Boston lettuce • Persian cucumber or cucumber (peeled) • Jicama • Onion • Zucchini (peeled)
Grains	Proteins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breads, including white bread, sourdough, English muffins, bagels, pancakes, plain pita, and waffles • Cereals, including rice-based cereals, corn flake cereal, cream of wheat, cream of rice, and creamed buckwheat • White crackers, such as saltines, pretzels, and rice cakes • Grits • Instant oats • Pasta • Rice, including white rice, cream of rice, and rice noodles 	<p>Nuts and seeds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nut butters like peanut, almond, cashew, etc. • Nut flours like almond, coconut, etc. <p>Plant proteins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm tofu • Seitan • Pureed (blended) beans, including hummus, bean dips, and pureed soups <p>Animal proteins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs • Meat, poultry, and fish (soft-cooked or ground) <p>Dairy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lactose-free dairy products may be better if you are having diarrhea.

Phase 2: Changing the forms of fiber that you eat

As you start to feel better or your inflammation improves, your **tolerance** for high fiber foods (how your body handles eating and digesting them without uncomfortable symptoms) will likely increase. Check out the recommendations in the table below for how to eat different fiber foods based on if your symptoms are **active** (bad or uncomfortable), **improving** (getting better), or **stabilized** (all better, with no current symptoms).

- The left column has suggestions for how to increase the amount of fiber you're eating (as tolerated). Don't continue to increase your fiber if you start having symptoms.

	Active symptoms: Start with pureed or blended forms of fiber	Improving symptoms: Increase your insoluble fiber with cooked forms of fiber	Stabilized symptoms: Add in raw forms or increase how much fiber you're eating
Leafy greens Increase by ½ to 1 cup per day every 1-3 days			
Berries Increase by ¼ to ½ cup per day every 1-3 days			
Beans and legumes Increase by ⅓ to ¼ cup per day every 1-3 days			

	Active symptoms: Start with pureed or blended forms of fiber	Improving symptoms: Increase your insoluble fiber with cooked forms of fiber	Stabilized symptoms: Add in raw forms or increase how much fiber you're eating
Nuts and seeds Increase by 1 tablespoon per day every 1-3 days			
Grains Increase by 1 slice bread or ½ cup per day every 1- 3 days			

Phase 3: Eating many different types of fiber

The ultimate diet goal is for you to eat many different types of foods with moderate to high amounts of fiber. Over time, you may learn which foods are better for you if you're having certain symptoms. The foods listed below are high in insoluble fiber, and they may become part of your diet when you are feeling your best (not having symptoms).

Fruits	Vegetables
<p>Most fruits with the skin on or with seeds are high in insoluble fiber:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apples • Blackberries • Blueberries • Cherries • Dried fruit • Kiwi • Nectarines 	<p>Most vegetables with the skin on are high in insoluble fiber:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabbage • Corn • Kale • Mushrooms • Okra • Peppers • Potatoes



Fruits	Vegetables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peaches • Persimmons • Pears • Pineapple • Plums • Strawberries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snap peas • Spinach • Sweet potatoes
Grains	Proteins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breads, including whole wheat, whole grain, rye, pumpernickel, and seeded breads • Cereals, like high fiber cereals made with wheat • Whole wheat crackers • Whole grains, including oats (steel cut or rolled), brown rice, wild rice, whole wheat, popcorn, rye, and bulgur 	<p>Nuts and seeds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole nuts like almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, peanuts, etc. • Whole seeds like chia, hemp, flax <p>Plant proteins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beans and pulses like cannellini beans, chickpeas, lentils, black beans, pinto beans, etc. <p>Animal protein:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough meats (steak, brisket, roast) as tolerated

What are some good tips for adding fiber to my diet?

- When you start to add fiber foods into your diet, always introduce them slowly and in small amounts to let your body adjust (learn to handle them). You may have bloating or gas if you try to introduce too much fiber too quickly.
- Drink plenty of water. Fiber needs a lot of fluid to work well for your body. Try to drink 8-10 cups of water every day.

Where can I find more information on fiber?

To learn more about fiber and how to make food with fiber easier to tolerate, you can check out these 2 videos from Michigan Medicine:

Video	QR code
Foods to Support Gut Health Series: Fiber Part 1 bit.ly/MM-FiberVideoPart1	
Foods to Support Gut Health Series: Fiber Part 2 bit.ly/MM-FiberVideoPart2	

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