

If you have constipation or hard, painful infrequent bowel movements, adding regular fiber to your diet can help. Fruits, vegetables, beans and “whole grain” foods have dietary fiber. Adding these to your diet is encouraged, but may not be sufficient to correct chronic (prolonged) constipation problems.

Note: Despite what many people may think, most salads are made up primarily of lettuce, which has very little fiber.

It is also important to make sure you drink sufficient non-caffeinated fluids – such as water – up to 64 ounces (6-8 glasses) per day along with any dietary change.

Your goal should be to have 30-40 grams of dietary fiber per day.

How can I add fiber to my diet?

In addition to the dietary recommendations above, there are 2 main ways in which you can easily add substantial amounts of fiber to your diet (you can choose one or both):

1. Eat high fiber breakfast cereal every day. This means one with more than 10 grams of fiber per serving.
2. Use a psyllium or equivalent product, such as Metamucil, in sufficient quantity daily. Sufficient quantity is often more than the recommended dose. Check the label for grams of fiber per serving or dose to figure out how much you need.

Where can I find high fiber breakfast cereals?

There are at least 3 breakfast cereals found in grocery stores that have more than 10 grams of dietary fiber per serving, which is what is needed:

1. All-Bran (10 grams fiber/serving)
2. Fiber One (14 grams fiber/serving)
3. Bran Buds (13 grams fiber/serving)

There are some others, such as Kashi products, that are high fiber, but you have to be careful to check the nutritional information box on the side of the package to be sure they have **at least 10 grams of fiber per serving**, and what the serving size is.

How much high fiber cereal should I eat?

You should start by eating 1/3 cup to ½ cup of a high fiber cereal every day. It may take 1-2 weeks for you to notice a significant difference, because it takes that long for the colon to adjust to the new diet. You may notice that you have more gas, which is **okay**. You may increase the amount of fiber, for example to ½ cup to 1 cup of cereal per day to achieve the desired effect, which is 1-2 soft bowel movements per day.

Are there fiber supplements can I take?

There are several types of fiber supplements you can take. They are available in drug stores and supermarkets:

- Psyllium (found in Metamucil) is a natural product that has many of the same dietary benefits as bran.
- Methylcellulose (found in Citrucel) is another natural product with similar benefits.
- FiberCon, which contains Calcium Polycarbophil, and Benefiber, which contains Dextrin, are two other products you can find on the market, which are slightly different.

Note: You have to check the package to see how many grams of fibers are contained in one serving. It is usually about 3 grams. This means you may need 3-4 servings per day to get the desired effect.

How do these products work?

Dietary fiber and fiber supplements are not laxatives, which stimulate bowel movements. They work by encouraging the growth of “good” bacteria in the large bowel, which help to produce a healthier bowel movement. Therefore, it may take some time (2 weeks or more) for you to begin to get the full beneficial effect. One of the side effects you may get is an increase in the amount of gas you produce. This does not mean that there is a problem. This effect lessens over time.

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