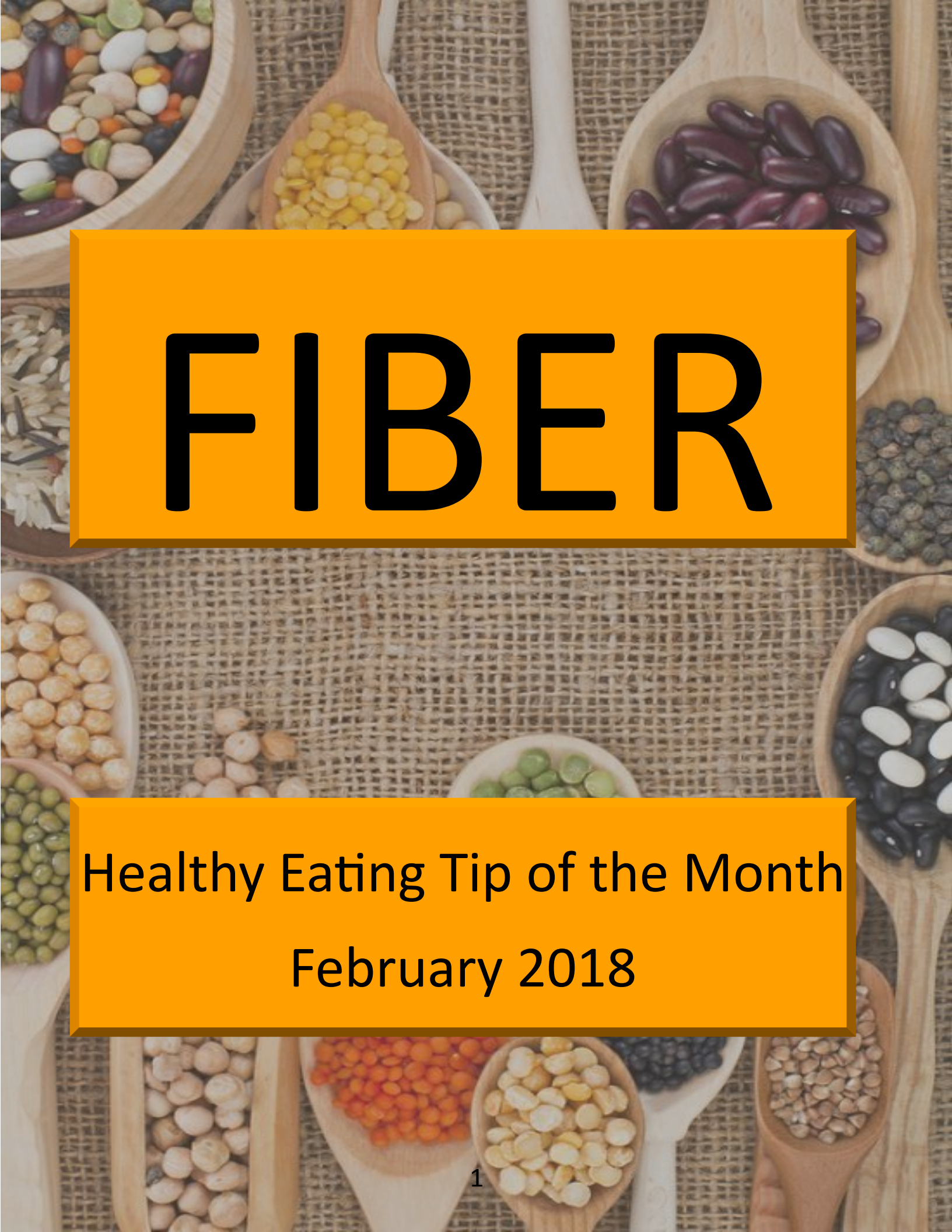

FIBER

Healthy Eating Tip of the Month

February 2018

What is Fiber?

Fiber is a carbohydrate found in plant foods that your body cannot digest.

Soluble fiber: attracts water and turns to gel during digestion. This process slows digestion.

Insoluble fiber: adds bulk to the stool and helps the food pass more quickly through the stomach and intestines.

How Much Fiber Should I Eat? Health experts recommend eating at least **25 grams** of fiber each day in balanced, mostly plant-based meals.

Eat whole grains and beans with most meals and select whole-grain breakfast cereals with 5 or more grams of dietary fiber per serving.

Sources of soluble fiber:	Sources of insoluble fiber:
Oats	Vegetables
Barley	Fruit
Beans	Whole grains
Fruit	Nuts
Nuts	Seeds

The Benefits of Fiber:

- Slows digestion, so you feel full longer
- Helps lower blood sugar levels
- Lowers blood cholesterol levels
- Dilutes harmful substances in the colon
- Prevents constipation
- Reduces the risk of:
  - Heart disease
  - High cholesterol
  - Diabetes
  - Stroke
  - Obesity
  - Certain types of cancers

Fiber Found in Common Foods

Food	Fiber (g)
White rice, 1/2 c cooked	0
Enriched pasta, 1/2 c cooked	1
Spinach, 1 c raw	1
White bread, 1 slice	1
Blueberries, 1/2 c	2
Brown rice, 1/2 c cooked	2
Carrots, 1/2 c cooked	2
Oatmeal, 1/2 c cooked	2
Whole wheat bread, 1 slice	2
Banana, 1 medium	3
Broccoli, 1/2 c cooked	3
Orange, 1 medium	3
Strawberries, 1 c sliced	3
Whole wheat pasta, 1/2 c cooked	3
Apple with skin, 1 medium	4
Hummus, 1/4 c	4
Potato, 1 medium with skin	4
Bran flakes, 1 c	7
Lentils, 1/2 c cooked	8
Black beans, 1 c cooked	15

Fiber Supplements:

Fiber supplements offer the same benefits as the *fiber* found in foods, but high-fiber foods are usually a rich source of other essential vitamins and minerals that are not provided by fiber supplements. Although there is no harm in taking fiber supplements, eating fiber-containing foods is recommended first.

Where is Fiber on the Food Label?

Look for high fiber foods that contain 10% or greater of Daily Value!

Is Fiber considered an Essential Nutrient?

Fiber is not considered an essential nutrient in the same way as the other vitamins and minerals. The absence of a deficiency state and recommended daily allowance (RDA) prohibits it from being considered an such. However, that doesn't mean that you should exclude it from your diet!

Beans are a great source of **natural fiber!**

What's the difference between added fiber and natural fiber?

Added fiber: low-fiber foods that are enriched with fiber such as cereals, pastas, and oatmeal.

Natural fiber: fiber that is found naturally in foods such as fruits, veggies and beans.

⇒ Both added fiber and natural fiber have been shown to provide the same health benefits!

Juicing vs. Smoothies

Which one is better?

Both juices and smoothies can help boost your fruit and vegetable intake as well as add variety to your diet, but one of these is the better choice. That would be the **smoothies!**

Juicing extracts nutrients while leaving behind the pulp and the skins of many fruits and veggies, which contain the fiber and extra vitamins & minerals. Without the fiber, juices can seem less filling compared to smoothies. What's more, when juices are made with fruit or high sugar veggies (like beets and carrots), you may experience a blood sugar spike.

Meanwhile, blending whole produce into a smoothie can help preserve the fiber content and increase your daily consumption of soluble and insoluble fibers. Additionally, you can add plenty of other superfoods to smoothies like chia seeds, low-fat yogurt and avocadoes to help maintain a level blood sugar by balancing the ratios of carbohydrates, protein and fat.

Easy Ways to Boost Fiber in Your Daily Diet

With a few simple and tasty substitutions, you can increase your fiber from foods in no time.

- For breakfast, choose steel cut oats with nuts and berries instead of a low-fiber, refined cereal.
- At lunch, have a sandwich or wrap on a whole-grain tortilla or whole-grain bread and add veggies, such as lettuce and tomato, or serve with veggie soup.
- For a snack, have fresh veggies or whole-grain crackers with hummus.
- With dinner, try brown rice or whole-grain noodles instead of white rice or pasta made with white flour.

When increasing fiber, be sure to do it gradually and with plenty of fluids. As dietary fiber travels through the digestive tract, is similar to a new sponge; it needs water to plump up and pass smoothly. If you consume more than your usual intake of fiber but not enough fluid, you may experience nausea or constipation. But don't worry! Your body will eventually adapt to the increased intake in fiber.

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