



Go further with food: Fiber

By: Hollie Gelberg, Ph.D., RD, and Michelle Ilan, dietetic intern

This year's theme for National Nutrition Month is "Go Further with Food." While all foods have calories, some foods offer greater nutritional value for those calories by also providing antioxidants, phytochemicals, vitamins, minerals, and fiber that promote health. By choosing nutrient-rich foods, we can go further in our daily activities and improve our overall health. One food component that especially helps our digestive tract "Go Further with Food" is fiber.

What is Fiber?

Fiber is a substance in plant foods that cannot be digested by the body. As a result, fiber creates bulk which helps move food smoothly through the digestive tract. Fiber is found in grains, fruits, vegetables, beans/lentils, soybeans, nuts, and seeds.

Health Benefits

Fiber not only moves food further along the digestive tract, but promotes health by reducing the risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, and diverticular disease. Specifically, fiber-rich foods promote feelings of fullness which can help with weight management, reduce and alleviate constipation, promote healthy bowel movements, help regulate blood sugars and promote heart health by reducing total cholesterol.

Daily Fiber Recommendation

Women: 25 g per day; over age 50: 21 g per day

Men: 38 g per day; over age 50: 30 g per day

Check nutrition fact labels for fiber content of packaged foods, or simply eat more plant foods to ensure adequate intake.

For personalized nutrition counseling, call (626) 397-5600, extension 6, to make an appointment with our registered dietitian. For more information, please visit: www.huntingtonhospital.org/nutritioncounseling

Sources:

The Nutrition Source. (n.d.). Fiber.

Retrieved from [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates/fiber/Larson, H. \(2017\).](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates/fiber/Larson, H. (2017).)

Easy ways to boost fiber in your daily diet.

Retrieved from <http://www.eatright.org/resource/food/vitamins-and-supplements/types-of-vitamins-and-nutrients/ways-to-boost-fiber>

Fiber-Rich Foods and Tips

A well-balanced diet consisting of the following plant foods can help increase fiber intake:

Grains: Choose whole grains such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, oats.

Fruits and Vegetables: Consume the skin (on appropriate fruits and veggies) for additional fiber; opt for whole fruits/vegetables over juice.

Beans, Lentils, and Soybeans:

Choose plant-based protein sources more often.

Nuts and Seeds: Make a great energy-dense snack that provides protein and healthy fat in just a small amount.

When increasing fiber intake, make sure it is gradual and increase water intake to allow the digestive tract to adjust and prevent discomfort. Choose nutritious, wholesome foods to "Go Further with Food" not just in the spirit of National Nutrition Month but as a lifestyle!