



Best Fiber Sources, to Fight Heart Disease, Obesity, Diabetes and More

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Fiber: Everything You Need to Know, Including the Best Fiber Sources, to Fight Heart Disease, Obesity, Diabetes and More

You know fiber is good for you, and perhaps you associate it with bran muffins and hearty grains. But what exactly is fiber? And why are nutrition experts recommending that Americans get more of it in their diets?

Fiber, a complex carbohydrate that cannot be digested (and therefore contains no calories), appears to reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, diverticular disease, metabolic syndrome and constipation, according to the Harvard School of Public Health, and research shows it may also be useful in preventing cancer and obesity, says the John Hopkins Medical Center.

Fiber comes from plant foods (fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes) and in two forms, soluble and insoluble, each of which provides health benefits. Soluble fibers such as gum and pectin dissolve partially in water, whereas insoluble fibers (cellulose, hemicellulose and lignin) do not.

How Does Fiber Work?

Some types of fiber work by bulking up waste, helping it to move through your system faster (this is how it helps with constipation and eliminating waste).

Other types of fiber are "sticky" and may help keep cholesterol levels in check by removing bile acids that digest fat, and may regulate blood sugar by coating the lining of your intestines and delaying the emptying of your stomach. This may slow your body's absorption of sugar and reduce the amount of necessary insulin. Other fibers may help with weight loss because they fill up the stomach, making you feel full but adding no extra calories.

Fiber for Heart Disease, Metabolic Syndrome and More

According to a Harvard study of over 40,000 men published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, **those with a high total dietary fiber intake had a 40 percent lower risk of coronary heart disease than those who had a low fiber intake.** A related study found similar results with women.

But that's not all. A study in the journal Diabetes Care found that eating fiber is associated with a lower risk of metabolic syndrome, an increasingly prevalent condition that increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes. People with metabolic syndrome have all or some of these factors: high blood pressure, high insulin levels, excess weight (particularly around the abdomen), high levels of triglycerides, and low levels of HDL (good) cholesterol, according to the Harvard School of Public Health.

As for diabetes, another quickly increasing condition in the United States, the Harvard studies mentioned above also found that eating a lot of fiber was linked to a lowered risk of type 2 diabetes.

How Much Fiber Should I Eat, and From What Foods?

The National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine gives the following daily fiber recommendations for adults:

- 38 grams for men and 25 grams for women 50 and younger
- 30 grams for men and 21 grams for women 51 and older

The good news is that if you think you need more fiber in your diet (it's estimated the average adult eats only between 10 and 15 grams daily), there are a number of excellent, and tasty, food sources out there. Check out the table below to pick your favorites, and **remember to include both types of fiber in your diet.**

Soluble Fiber	Insoluble Fiber
Apples	1. Whole grains
Oranges	2. Whole wheat breads
Pears	3. Barley
Peaches	4. Couscous
Grapes	5. Brown rice
Prunes	6. Bulgur
Blueberries	7. Whole-grain breakfast cereals
Strawberries	8. Wheat bran
Seeds and Nuts	9. Seeds
Oat bran	10. Vegetables:
Dried beans	• Carrots
Oatmeal	• Cucumbers
Barley	• Zucchini
Rye	• Celery
Vegetables	• Tomatoes

If you'd like to get more fiber in your diet, but are concerned you're not getting enough from foods, you should definitely consider trying the top-recommended Super Seed: Beyond Fiber, a powerful whole-food formula that supplies your body with a highly usable, nutrient-dense, vegetarian source of dietary fiber from flax seed, chia seed, sprouted quinoa, sprouted amaranth, pumpkin seed, sunflower seed, sesame seed, millet, buckwheat, fiber from garbanzo, red lentil, kidney and adzuki beans.

Tips for Creating a High-Fiber Diet

- Eat fewer processed foods and more fresh ones.
- Eat high-fiber cereal for breakfast (one with bran or fiber in the name, not highly processed varieties), or add some unprocessed wheat bran to yogurt.
- Snack on fruits and raw vegetables.
- Add ground flax seeds and other seeds to smoothies.
- Use bran products as toppings for casseroles, meatloaf, veggies and more.
- Eat whole-grain breads and substitute whole-grain flour for white flour.
- Add beans to soups, salads and chili.
- Eat whole fruits (including the skin and membranes) instead of drinking fruit juice.
- Use brown rice and whole-grain pasta instead of white rice and pasta.
- Try international dishes that include high-fiber foods (tabbouleh or Indian dahls).