Fiber

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Fiber is the structural part of plants that cannot be digested, such as stems or the bran of the seed. Fiber has no calories, but it is still an important part of a healthy diet.

Fiber:
- Helps to regulate bowel movements
- Makes us feel full
- Lowers blood sugar
- Lowers blood cholesterol
- May reduce the risk of getting certain types of cancer

Insoluble fiber
One type of dietary fiber is called “insoluble fiber,” “roughage” or “bulk.” This fiber does not dissolve in water. The main job of insoluble fiber is to keep the intestinal tract healthy by reducing the amount of time that food sits in the intestines. If food sits too long in the intestines it can cause constipation. Food sources of insoluble fiber are:
- Wheat bran
- Whole grains
- Fruits
- Vegetables

Soluble Fiber
The other type of dietary fiber is soluble fiber. Soluble fiber helps regulate blood sugar, removes cholesterol from the blood and reduces the risk of heart disease. Soluble fiber is found in:
- Dried beans
- Peas
- Lentils
- Oats
- Barley
- Fruits
- Vegetables

Get Enough Fiber in Your Diet
Follow your MyPyramid eating plan to get enough fiber in your diet. For most adults, eating 20-30 grams of dietary fiber each day is best. It’s easy!
- Eat at least 3 servings of vegetables each day.
- Eat at least 2 servings of fruits each day.
- Eat at least 3 servings of whole grains each day.

“Diets rich in whole-grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may help reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.”
Make Half Your Grains Whole

The USDA Dietary Guidelines advise, “Make half your grains whole!” Sometimes finding whole-grain foods is tricky. Read the ingredient list on the food label. **The whole grain should be the first ingredient listed.**

Look for the whole-grain health claim: “Diets rich in whole-grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may help reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.”

Foods that bear the whole-grain health claim must:
- Contain 51 percent or more whole grains by weight
- Be low in fat

Compare the nutrition information about whole-grain wheat flour and the same amount of enriched, bleached, all-purpose flour below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calories/ Nutrients</th>
<th>Flour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% Whole Wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories (kcal)</td>
<td>339.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary fiber (grams)</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium (milligrams)</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium (milligrams)</td>
<td>138.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium (milligrams)</td>
<td>405.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate (micrograms)</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See NEP-202 for a list of whole grains that are easy to find in the United States. Place a check mark beside the foods that are sources of whole grains.

- Pearl barley
- Enriched flour
- Brown rice
- Degermed corn meal
- Converted rice
- Popcorn
- Whole wheat
- Wheat flour
- Bulgur
- Oatmeal
- Graham flour
- Whole rye

10 Ways to Add Fiber to Your Diet

- Eat berries
- Eat more legumes, such as dried beans
- Choose romaine lettuce or spinach instead of iceberg lettuce
- Enjoy 100 percent whole-wheat or whole-grain bread
- Eat whole-grain breakfast cereals
- Choose brown rice instead of white
- Eat the skins on fruits and vegetables, such as apples and potatoes
- Eat corn, including popcorn
- Snack on dried fruit
- Eat whole fruits and vegetables instead of drinking juice