



Fabulous Fiber

By Victoria Shanta Retelny, RD, LDN

We know that we need to eat more fiber. But why? Fiber-rich foods like the skins of fruits and vegetables, the pectin in the flesh of apples, pears and bananas and the gritty outer layers of whole grains provide our intestines with a work out. Research reveals that fiber helps our bodies control blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels better, as well as stave off certain cancers, such as colorectal cancer. It can also help fend off excess weight gain by helping you feel full on fewer calories. This is precisely why fiber is on the public health radar screen.

Aim to get at least 14 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories you eat (so for a 2,000 calorie diet, that's 28 grams a day). Fibrous foods like whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts and fruits and veggies contain more than just fiber - you get plant-based chemicals called phytonutrients, as well as vitamins and minerals like vitamin E, vitamin B6, magnesium, zinc, iron, copper, manganese, and potassium, as well as plant protein – all good things!

Try upping the fiber in your favorite recipes, side dishes and desserts. The best way to do this is to switch to whole grains and add some beans. Next time you go grocery shopping, plan to fill your cart with a variety of fiber-rich foods.

Fiber-friendly shopping list:

- Rolled oats
- Whole grain cereals
- Whole wheat flour
- Brown rice
- Long grain wild rice
- Whole wheat pasta
- Whole grain crackers
- Whole grain bread
- Tabbulleh salad (made with bulgur wheat)
- Canned beans (be sure to rinse and drain before use)
- Fresh or frozen fruits and veggies
- Raw nuts and seeds

Go for the fiber!