

Fiber

It's Time to Double Up!



Different Fibers

Beta-Glucan

Beta-glucan is a viscous fiber in oats and barley that sweeps cholesterol from the digestive tract before it reaches your bloodstream. Beta-glucan also helps improve insulin resistance and manage blood sugar levels. Finally, beta-glucan is fermented by the good gut bacteria, helping them to thrive.

Fermentable Fibers

Other foods with fibers that feed your gut bacteria include asparagus, onions, leeks, garlic, wheat, and soybeans.

Viscous Fibers

Viscous fibers from legumes – dry beans, peas, and lentils – also improves blood glucose and cholesterol levels.

Psyllium

Psyllium, which is frequently consumed as a fiber supplement, also helps lower cholesterol.

Wheat Bran and Fruit and Vegetable Fiber

Wheat bran and fiber from many fruits and vegetables add bulk to the stool and speed up passage of the stool.

Americans consume only about half as much fiber as recommended. The average intake is a mere 16 grams daily, yet experts tell us that men and women should aim for 38 and 25 grams per day respectively. **Getting the right amount — and the right types — of fiber can help you** stay regular in the bathroom, control your blood sugar and cholesterol levels, optimally feed your gut bacteria, and probably even help you prevent chronic diseases.

But **not all fibers are the same**. Just like we need a variety of vitamins, we need different types of fibers. And just like different vitamins have different jobs, different fibers do too. Many people have heard of soluble and insoluble fibers, but these are only descriptions of how the fibers behave in water. They don't tell us what the fibers do in the body. The chart above gives a small sample of all the fun you can have with fiber.

You may not be getting enough fiber or enough variety of fibers, but a few simple changes can make a big difference. Eat fruits and/or vegetables every time you eat (all fruits and vegetables give us fiber). Or eat legumes at least a few times each week. You can also enjoy all types of whole grains. In addition, it helps to read food labels on crackers, breads and cereals. Try to find products with at least 1 gram of fiber for every 50 calories. If you start with one of these tips, then add a second, then another, etc, and are consistent over time, you'll meet your fiber goal. Add fiber gradually and drink plenty of water to avoid gas, bloating and discomfort.