

Fibre and your health

What is fibre?

Fibre, also called dietary fibre, is the part of plant foods that the body cannot digest. Fibre is found in vegetables and fruit, whole grain foods, nuts and seeds, and beans, peas and lentils.

Why is fibre important?

Eating fibre-rich foods can lower your risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and colon cancer. Fibre can be either insoluble or soluble. Most foods have a combination of both.

Insoluble fibre is found in vegetables and fruit, especially their skins. Whole grains, wheat bran and corn bran are also good sources. It can help:

- Keep your gut healthy
- Prevent constipation

Soluble fibre is also found in vegetables and fruit, as well as oats, barley, psyllium, and legumes like beans and lentils. It can help:

- Lower your blood cholesterol
- Control your blood sugar
- Keep you feeling full longer

How much fibre do I need?

Aim for the following amount of fibre each day:

Age (years)	Male	Female
1 to 3	19 g	19 g
4 to 8	25 g	25 g
9 to 13	31 g	26 g
14 to 18	38 g	26 g
19 to 50	38 g	25 g
51+	30 g	21 g
Pregnancy (any age)	-	28 g
Lactation (any age)	-	29 g

g = gram

Some people may need to limit or change the type of fibre they eat to help manage a medical condition. Speak with your health care provider or registered dietitian to find out how much fibre is right for you.

How can I increase the amount of fibre I eat?

Most people eat only half the fibre they need. Add fibre to your diet slowly to limit gas, cramping and discomfort. As you eat more fibre, drink plenty of fluids such as water to help keep your bowel movements soft. Try the following tips:

- Include vegetables or fruit at every meal and snack. Fresh, frozen and canned are all good options
- Add brown or wild rice, quinoa, pot barley or bulgur to soups, salads, and stir-fries
- Keep canned lentils and beans on hand for a quick addition to soups, casseroles, pasta sauces, and salads
- Top yogurt or salads with dried fruits, nuts or seeds or add them to baked goods
- Start the day with a whole grain cereal such as oatmeal or whole grain bread

If you find it hard to eat enough fibre from food, talk to your health care provider or call **8-1-1** to speak with a registered dietitian.

What should I look for on food labels?

Check the nutrition facts table on food labels for the amount of fibre in a serving. The percent daily value (% DV) shows if the food has a little or a lot of fibre: 5% DV or less is a little, 15% DV or more is a lot. Look for foods with a higher % DV.

You can also use the food label to identify whole grain foods. Whole grains have more fibre, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains. Look for the words "whole grain" in the list of ingredients when buying packaged foods like breads, cereals, pastas and crackers.

Whole wheat foods, such as 100% whole wheat bread, may not be whole grain but are still a good source of fibre.

How much fibre is in food?

Use the table below to find out how much fibre a food contains. You can also check the [Canadian Nutrient File](#) for the fibre content of a specific food.

Food Sources of Fibre

Food	Serving Size	Total Fibre (grams)
Vegetables and fruit		
Yellow beans, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	9.7
Avocado	½ fruit	6.7
Pear, with skin	1 medium	5.3
Blackberries or raspberries	125 mL (½ cup)	4.1
Potato, with skin	1 medium	3.9
Green peas, frozen, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	3.7
Apple, with skin	1 medium	3.5
Brussels sprouts	4 sprouts	3.1
Mixed vegetables, frozen, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	2.8
Yam, cooked (cubes)	125 mL (½ cup)	2.8
Orange	1 medium	2.3
Corn, carrot or broccoli, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	2.2
Banana or kiwi	1 medium	2.1
Pear, canned halves	125 mL (½ cup)	2.1
Grains		
All bran cereal (any kind)	30 g (125 mL or ½ cup)	9.7
Bran flakes	30 g (250 mL or 1 cup)	4.9
Shredded Wheat	30 g (160 mL or 2/3 cup)	3.9
Oat Bran, prepared	175 mL (¾ cup)	3.7
Bread, sprouted grain	1 slice (35 g)	3.3 to 4.5
Oatmeal, large oats, prepared	175 mL (¾ cup)	3.2
Bran, 100% natural wheat bran	30 mL (2 Tbsp)	3.1
Quinoa, amaranth or bulgur, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	2.7
Popcorn, air-popped	500 mL (2 cups)	2.5
Whole wheat spaghetti, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	2.4
Whole wheat bread, commercial	1 slice (35 g)	2.1
Beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds		
Adzuki beans, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	12.4
Black beans, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	10.5
Kidney beans, dark red, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	8.6
Hummus	175 mL (¾ cup)	7 to 11
Soy nuts, roasted	175 mL (¾ cup)	6.8
Edamame (green soy beans), cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	6.0
Lentils or garbanzo beans (chickpeas), cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	5.5
Split peas, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	4.2
Almonds, dry roasted	60 mL (¼ cup)	3.8
Chia seeds	15 mL (1 Tbsp)	3.7
Sunflower seed kernels, dry roasted	60 mL (¼ cup)	3.6
Peanuts, dry roasted	60 mL (¼ cup)	3.1
Flax seeds, whole	15 mL (1 Tbsp)	2.9
Peanut butter, natural	30 mL (2 Tbsp)	2.5

g = gram, mL = millilitre, Tbsp = tablespoon

Source: [Canadian Nutrient File](#).

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