



...Naturally!

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Fiber Facts

Fiber – you know it’s good for you, but why? And, how much fiber do you need daily to help promote good health? And just what is soluble fiber versus dietary fiber? You’ll find the answers to these questions and more with these quick facts on fiber.

What is fiber?

Dietary fiber comes from plants and is made up of carbohydrates (chains of sugars), that can’t be fully digested by humans. Because the chains of sugars can’t be broken down, they pass through the body without providing energy, or calories. However, dietary fiber can somewhat be digested by bacteria found in humans’ digestive systems.

Is there more than one type of fiber?

The types of dietary fiber are classified according to how readily they dissolve in water. For example, insoluble fiber does not dissolve in water and is found in foods such as wheat bran and whole grains. Soluble fiber does dissolve in water and is found in oat bran, barley, beans and legumes. Many foods contain a combination of both soluble and insoluble fiber, like fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes.

How much fiber should I get in a day?

The recommendation for total fiber intake from the National Academy of Sciences is 25 grams per day for women, 28 grams per day for pregnant women, and 38 grams per day for men, based on the intake level observed to protect against coronary heart disease. In general, aim for getting 20-35 grams of fiber daily. Although there isn’t a recommendation for daily soluble fiber intake, consuming at least 3 grams of soluble fiber daily, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease.

What are the health benefits of eating a fiber-rich diet?

Fiber is beneficial to your health for several reasons:

- ◆ Promotes feelings of fullness because fiber-rich foods absorb water and swell, and also move slowly through the digestive tract, helping you feel full faster and for a longer period of time, usually resulting in consumption of fewer calories.
- ◆ Useful in weight control because energy consumption is reduced when calorie-dense fats and sweets are displaced with foods high in fiber, which contribute fewer calories.
- ◆ Helps prevent constipation and bacterial infection of the intestinal system by keeping the intestine moist, allowing waste to pass easily through.
- ◆ Stimulates digestive tract muscles, helping prevent diverticulosis (inflamed sacs that can form in the intestine), which occur as a result of weak intestinal muscles.

- ◆ Associated with a reduced risk of colon cancer because of increased transit time of cancer-causing material through the colon.
- ◆ Soluble fiber, in particular, contributes to lowering blood cholesterol levels by binding bile acids, substances made of cholesterol, therefore passing them through as waste so that the body does not absorb them. Additionally, foods high in fiber may take the place of cholesterol-containing foods in the diet.
- ◆ Soluble fiber keeps blood sugar and insulin levels stable, improving the body's handling of glucose (blood sugar). For diabetic patients, adequate intake of foods high in soluble fiber may help blood sugar control and diabetes management.
- ◆ Provides complex carbohydrates for a steady release of energy.

What do the label claims about fiber mean?

You may see several different label claims on various foods, including:

- ◆ High fiber = 5 grams or more per serving
- ◆ Good source of fiber = 2.5 to 4.5 grams per serving
- ◆ More or added fiber = at least 2.5 grams more per serving (as compared with a standard serving of the traditional food)

Health claims for fiber approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- ◆ Low fat diets rich in fiber-containing grain products, fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of some types of cancers, a disease associated with many factors.
- ◆ Diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol and rich in fruits, vegetables and grain products that contain fiber, particularly soluble fiber, may reduce the risk of heart disease, a disease associated with many factors.
- ◆ Three grams of soluble fiber daily from oat grains as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease.

The amounts of dietary fiber and (in some cases) soluble fiber per serving in a food can be found on the nutrition facts label under **total carbohydrates**. Vermont Morning multi-grain hot cereal nutrition facts label is listed below:

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size	1/2 cup (63g)	
Calories	240	
From fat & (%)	30 (12.5%)	
% Daily Value		
Total Fat	3.5g	5%
Saturated Fat	0.5g	3%
Trans Fat	0g	
Cholesterol	0mg	
Sodium	0mg	
Total Carbohydrate	43g	14%
Dietary Fiber	8g	32%
Soluble Fiber	3g	
Sugars	<1g	
Protein	9g	
Vitamins	A 0%	C 0%
Calcium	4%	
Iron	15%	