



[Return to Web version](#)

## Fiber: How to Increase the Amount in Your Diet

### Why should I eat more fiber?

Eating the right amount of fiber has been shown to have a wide range of health benefits. Foods that are high in fiber can help in the treatment of constipation, hemorrhoids, diverticulitis (the inflammation of pouches in the digestive tract) and irritable bowel syndrome. Dietary fiber may also help lower your cholesterol, and reduce your risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Eating fiber-rich foods also aids in digestion, the absorption of nutrients and helps you to feel fuller longer after a meal (which can help curb overeating and weight gain).

[Return to top](#)

### How can I get more fiber in my diet?

The amount of fiber you should get from your diet each day depends on your age and sex. Men age 50 and younger should consume at least 38 grams of fiber per day, while men over age 50 should aim for at least 30 grams of fiber daily. Women age 50 and younger should consume at least 25 grams of fiber per day, while women over age 50 should aim for at least 21 grams of fiber daily.

Try the following ideas to increase the fiber in your diet:

- Eat at least 2 cups of fruits and 2 1/2 cups of vegetables each day. Fruits and vegetables that are high in fiber include:
  - Beans such as navy (1/2 cup = 9.5 grams), kidney (1/2 cup = 8.2 grams), pinto (1/2 cup = 7.7 grams), black (1/2 cup = 7.5), lima (1/2 = 6.6 grams), white (1/2 cup = 6.3 grams) and great northern (1/2 cup = 6.2 grams).
  - Artichokes (1 artichoke = 6.5 grams)
  - Sweet potatoes (1 medium sweet potato = 4.8 grams)
  - Pears (1 small pear = 4.4 grams)
  - Green peas (1/2 cup = 4.4 grams)
  - Berries such as raspberries (1/2 cup = 4.0 grams) and blackberries (1/2 cup = 3.8 grams)
  - Prunes (1/2 cup = 3.8 grams)
  - Figs and dates (1/4 cup = 3.6 grams)
  - Spinach (1/2 cup = 3.5 grams)
  - Apples (1 medium apple = 3.3 grams)
  - Oranges (1 medium orange = 3.1 grams)
- Replace refined white bread with whole-grain breads and cereals. Eat brown rice instead of white rice. Eat more of the following foods:
  - Bran muffins
  - Oatmeal

- Bran or multiple-grain cereals, cooked or dry
  - Brown rice
  - Popcorn
  - 100% whole-wheat bread
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- When eating store-bought foods, check the nutrition information labels for the amounts of dietary fiber in each product. Aim for 5 grams of fiber per serving.
  - Add 1/4 cup of wheat bran (miller's bran) to foods such as cooked cereal, applesauce or meat loaf.
  - Eat beans each week.

[Return to top](#)

## **Start slowly.**

When you first add fiber to your diet you may notice bloating, cramping or gas. But you can prevent this by making smaller changes in your diet over a period of time. Start with one of the changes listed above, then wait several days to a week before making another. If one change doesn't seem to work for you, try a different one.

Be sure to drink more fluids when you increase the amount of fiber you eat. Liquids help your body digest fiber. Try to drink 8 glasses of no- or low-calorie beverages, such as water, unsweetened tea or diet soda each day.

[Return to top](#)

## **Source**

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