

# Fibre

## Take a Closer Look at Fibre and Health

### What is Dietary Fibre?

Dietary fibre is part of plant foods that humans cannot digest. It is found in grain products, vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds. There is no fibre in meat, milk and milk alternatives. It helps to keep your bowels regular; it helps to keep blood cholesterol under control, therefore reducing the risk for heart disease; it may lower the risk for type 2 diabetes, diverticular disease, certain bowel diseases and some cancers. Fibre may help control appetite and weight by filling you up and making you feel full longer.

### How Much Fibre Do We Need?

Health Canada recommends adults consume 38 grams per day of fibre for men and 25 grams per day of fibre for women. Canadians tend to eat less than half of the daily recommended amount.

#### Different types of fibre:

There are different kinds of fibre with different health benefits. The two main types of fibre are **soluble** and **insoluble**.

All plants have both types of fibre; some have more of one than the other.

### Soluble and Insoluble Fibre - What is the Difference?

| Insoluble Fibre  | Soluble Fibre   |
|--|---|
| Passes through your digestive system unchanged; referred to as roughage and bulk.  | Forms a gel when it mixes with water; has a "sticky and gummy" texture when cooked.   |
| Helps the intestines work smoothly and prevents constipation; may help prevent diseases of the bowel.                          | Helps reduce harmful (LDL) blood cholesterol levels; Controls blood sugar levels. Slows down the rate that glucose (sugar) enters the blood.                                  |
| Sources: wheat bran, whole grain breads and cereals, flax seeds, some vegetables and fruit (especially skins), nuts and seeds. | Sources: oat bran, oatmeal, legumes, (beans, peas, and lentils), barley, some vegetables and fruit (apples, strawberries, oranges), psyllium, and inulin (from chicory root). |

### Tips to Add More Fibre to your Diet Daily

Slowly add more fibre to your diet. Too much can cause bloating, gas and a feeling of discomfort. Drink plenty of water to help your body use the fibre and prevent constipation and discomfort.

1. Go for a bowl of high fibre bran or whole grain cereal with fresh or frozen berries and a lower fat yogurt.
2. Choose oatmeal more often. It's a great warming winter breakfast.
3. Try various breads including whole grain, multi grain, chapattis, whole wheat pitas, bagels, roti and tortillas and different grains such as whole wheat couscous, bulgur and cornmeal.

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4. Substitute whole wheat pasta for regular pasta and brown or wild rice for white rice more often.
5. Eat more legumes such as chick peas in salads, beans in tacos or lentils in meatloaf. Try a vegetarian chili or add a can of beans into a soup, salad or casserole.
6. Choose two or more servings of vegetables or fruit with every meal or snack and leave the peel on. Have vegetables and fruit more often than juice.
7. Add ground flax to smoothies, salads and muffins.
8. Offer hummus as a high-fibre dip with vegetables and whole wheat crackers instead of doughnuts or cookies at meetings and functions.
9. Snack on a home-made trail mix of whole grain cereal, dried fruit, nuts and seeds.
10. Add raisins and nuts to home-made baked goods and substitute whole wheat flour for white flour.

## Take a Closer Look at Fibre...on the Label

**Read the Ingredient List.** Look at the ingredients list rather than the colour of the foods. Some brown bread is coloured with molasses, caramel or other food colouring. The ingredient list should include either 'whole' or 'whole wheat' in front of the type of grain as the first or second ingredient, such as whole-grain wheat, oats, whole grain corn, barley or brown or wild rice.

**Nutrition Facts Table** is the best place to see how much fibre is in the product.

| Nutrition Facts          |               | Per 1 cup (55g) |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Amount                   | % Daily Value |                 |
| Calorie                  | 220           |                 |
| Fat 2g                   | 3%            |                 |
| Saturated 0 g<br>+ trans | 0%            |                 |
| Cholesterol 0 mg         |               |                 |
| Sodium 270 mg            | 11%           |                 |
| Carbohydrate 44 g        | 15%           |                 |
| Fibre 8 g                | 32%           |                 |
| Sugars 16 g              |               |                 |
| Protein 6 g              |               |                 |
| Vitamin A 0%             | Vitamin C 0%  |                 |
| Calcium 4%               | Iron 40%      |                 |

Look at the serving size at the top of the table. Always compare the serving size to the amount that you will eat to determine the actual total amount of fibre that you would consume. The Nutrition Facts Table will give you the total amount of fibre in milligrams per serving.

Check the Percent Daily Value (%DV) for fibre. The %DV tells you whether a food has a little or a lot of a given nutrient - 5%DV is a little and 15%DV is a lot. Use the %DV to compare different products and choose the product with the highest %DV.

### Look for and Understand Nutrition Claims on the Label

When a product has a claim about fibre on it's label it must meet the following government guidelines:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Source           | Contains at least two grams of fibre per serving   |
| High Source      | Contains at least four grams of fibre per serving. |
| Very High Source | Contains at least six grams of fibre per serving.  |

For other good sources of nutrition information, check out the Dietitians of Canada website at [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca) and EatRight Ontario at [www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca)