

# The Power of Fiber



Fiber is one of the most important parts of a balanced diet. It comes in a wide variety of foods including fruits, vegetables and whole grains. The benefits of fiber are not limited to merely improving digestive tract function. Fiber also has the power to lower your LDL cholesterol, or your “bad cholesterol,” and help balance blood sugar. Fiber also plays a role in weight loss by helping you feel full quicker.

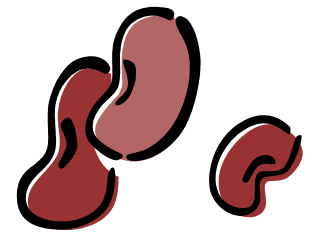


There are two types of fiber: soluble and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber works by attracting water which slows digestion and helps you feel fuller for longer. By slowing digestion, it allows for maximum time for the body to draw out nutrients from food as well as slowing down the increase in blood sugar that comes from eating. Foods that are high in soluble fiber include oatmeal, beans and nuts.

Insoluble fiber is the fiber that adds bulk to your digestive tract and helps move things along. It helps prevent constipation by speeding up the movement of digested foods through the GI tract. This can help prevent the condition known as Diverticulosis, where small pouches are “pushed out” of the intestines allowing small, indigestible foods such as seeds to get stuck in the pouches. When foods get stuck in the pouches they can become painfully infected, leading to a condition known as Diverticulitis. Insoluble fiber can be found in whole grains such as brown rice, vegetables and fruit.

The average person only needs 28 grams of fiber per day to improve digestion, cholesterol and weight control and should try to focus on getting both soluble and insoluble fiber. To find out how much fiber is in the food you are eating, check the food label under total carbohydrates, and you will find dietary fiber in grams. A few of the top fiber containing foods are:

1. Beans, cooked (navy, pinto, kidney, etc): 6.2 – 9.6 grams. per ½ cup
2. Pear: 5.5 g. per medium fruit
3. Bran cereal: 9.1 grams per 1/3 cup
4. Mixed vegetables, cooked: 4 g. per ½ cup
5. Whole wheat English muffin: 4.4 g per muffin



*Source: Jennifer Vargas, BSBS, FSP, with fiber content from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.*