

Fiber Facts



The average American diet contains about 15 grams of fiber. The American Heart Association and the American Diabetes Association recommend eating 25–38 grams of fiber a day in a well-balanced diet. High fiber foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can help reduce the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and several forms of cancer. These high fiber foods may also improve blood pressure.

Fiber is part of plant foods that we cannot absorb or digest. It is found in fruits, vegetables, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and whole grains. Fiber is also known as roughage or bulk.

There are two kinds of dietary fiber: insoluble and soluble. It is important to eat plenty of both types of fiber.

- **Insoluble fiber** comes from fruits, grains, and vegetables. It adds bulk and acts like a brush, cleaning out the colon. While passing through the digestive tract, insoluble fiber remains mostly intact, which helps keep your bowel movements regular.

- **Soluble fiber** comes from fruit, certain vegetables, oats, beans, peas, lentils, and barley. When mixed with liquid, the soluble fiber forms a gel, which helps control blood sugar and reduce cholesterol.

Whole grains refer to a grain that has not been “refined.” This means that the grain is intact and consists of the germ (the inner layer), the endosperm (the middle layer), and the bran (fiber rich outer layer). Aim for at least half of your grain choices to come from whole grains.

Tips on adding more fiber to your diet

- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Include skins and peels when you can because they contain a lot of fiber.
- Eat beans, peas, lentils, and bran cereals daily.
- Eat breads, cereals, tortillas, and crackers that list whole wheat, whole oat flour, whole rye, or whole cornmeal as the first ingredient on the label.
- Add fiber to your diet slowly. If you add it too fast, you may feel bloated and have gas pains.
- Unless your doctor has told you not to, drink 6–8 cups of water and other fluids daily to keep things moving smoothly through your intestines.
- If you eat wheat bran to keep your bowels moving, start with 1 teaspoon per meal. Slowly increase to 2–4 tablespoons per day.
- Select unprocessed foods more often. Frequently, food processing decreases the fiber content of foods.

Read food labels

Read food labels to find the “Dietary Fiber” content of the foods you eat. Good sources of fiber have at least 10% of the Percent Daily Value for fiber.

When looking for whole grain products, read the ingredient list. For example, on the ingredient list shown below for whole wheat cereal, the first ingredient is “whole grain wheat.”

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1 cup (50g)		
Servings Per Container About 13		
Amount Per Serving	Wheat Chex	with 1/2 cup skim milk
Calories	180	220
Calories from Fat	10	10
% Daily Value**		
Total Fat 1g*	2%	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	0%
Trans Fat 0g		
Polyunsaturated Fat 0g		
Monounsaturated Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	1%
Sodium 420mg	18%	20%
Potassium 190mg	6%	11%
Total Carbohydrate 40g	13%	15%
Dietary Fiber 5g	22%	22%
Soluble Fiber 1g		
Sugars 5g		
Other Carbohydrate 30g		
Protein 5g		

INGREDIENTS: WHOLE GRAIN WHEAT, SUGAR, SALT, CALCIUM CARBONATE, BARLEY MALT EXTRACT, TRISODIUM PHOSPHATE. FRESHNESS PRESERVED BY BHT.
VITAMINS AND MINERALS: IRON AND ZINC (MINERAL NUTRIENTS), VITAMIN C (SODIUM ASCORBATE), A B VITAMIN (NIACINAMIDE), VITAMIN B₁ (THIAMIN MONONITRATE), VITAMIN B₆ (PYRIDOXINE HYDROCHLORIDE), VITAMIN A (PALMITATE), VITAMIN B₂ (RIBOFLAVIN), A B VITAMIN (FOLIC ACID), VITAMIN B₁₂, VITAMIN D.
CONTAINS WHEAT INGREDIENTS.

Fiber Content of Foods

Use the chart below to add up the fiber you have eaten or plan to eat in one day.

Vegetables	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)	Fruits	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Artichoke hearts, cooked	1/2 cup	5g	Apple, with peel	1 medium	3g
Avocado	1/2 cup	6g	Apricots	1 medium	1g
Bamboo Shoots	1/2 cup	1g	Asian Pear	1 medium	4g
Beets	1/2 cup	2g	Banana	1 medium	3g
Broccoli, cooked	1/2 cup	3g	Cantaloupe	1/2 cup	1g
Brussel Sprouts	1/2 cup	3g	Cherries	10 medium	1g
Cabbage, cooked	1/2 cup	1g	Figs, raw	1 medium	1g
Carrots, raw	1 medium	2g	Honeydew	1/2 cup	2g
Cauliflower, cooked	1/2 cup	1g	Mango	1 medium	4g
Chinese Mustard Greens	1/2 cup	2g	Nectarine	1 medium	2g
Eggplant, cooked	1/2 cup	2g	Orange	1 medium	3g
Fennel, raw/sliced	1/2 cup	1g	Papaya	1/2 cup	1g
Green Beans, cooked	1/2 cup	2g	Peach, with skin	1 medium	2g
Lettuce	1/2 cup	<1g	Pear, with skin	1 medium	5g
Onions, chopped	1/2 cup	1g	Prunes, dried	1/2 cup	6g
Peas, cooked	1/2 cup	4g	Raisins, dried	1/2 cup	3g
Shiitake Mushrooms, cooked	1/2 cup	3g	Raspberries	1/2 cup	4g
Spinach, cooked	1/2 cup	4g	Strawberries, sliced	1/2 cup	2g
Swiss Chard, cooked	1/2 cup	2g	Cereal	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
Tofu (firm)	1/2 cup	1g	All Bran (100%) cereal	1/2 cup	9g
Tomato, raw	1 medium	2g	Cheerios	1 cup	4g
Turnips, cooked	1/2 cup	2g	Granola	1 cup	3g
White Corn, raw	1/2 cup	2g	* Instant Oatmeal	1 cup	4g
Zucchini, sliced	1/2 cup	<1g	Quaker Oatmeal Squares	1 cup	4g
Dry Beans and Nuts	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)	Raisin Bran	1 cup	7g
Almonds	1/4 cup	4g	Shredded Wheat	1 cup	6g
* Black Beans, cooked	1/2 cup	8g	Wheaties	1 cup	3g
Lentils, cooked	1/2 cup	8g	Bread, Rice, and Pasta	Serving Size	Dietary Fiber (g)
* Lima Beans, cooked	1/2 cup	7g	* Barley, cooked	1 cup	6g
* Navy Beans, cooked	1/2 cup	10g	Brown Rice, cooked	1 cup	4g
* Peanuts	1/4 cup	3g	Whole Wheat Tortilla	1 piece	2g
Pecans, chopped	1/4 cup	3g	Macaroni, whole wheat cooked	1 cup	4g
* Pinto Beans, cooked	1/2 cup	8g	Rice Noodles	1 cup	2g
Pistachio	1/4 cup	3g	Rye Bread	1 slice	2g
* Soy Beans (Edamame)	1/2 cup	5g	Wheat Bread	1 slice	3g
* White Beans, cooked	1/2 cup	6g	Wheat English Muffin	1 cup	3g
* High in soluble fiber			Wild Rice, cooked	1 cup	3g

Other resources

Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org. Here you'll find the Health Encyclopedia or kp.org/nutrition, which offers more in-depth information on this and many other topics. Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*. Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

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