

FIBRE

Most Australians do not consume enough fibre. On average, Australians consume 18-25g of fibre daily, whereas the Heart Foundation recommends that adults should consume approximately 30g daily. Dietary fibre is a type of carbohydrate found in the indigestible parts of plants, with its primary role is to maintain the digestive system's health. Good sources of fibre include wholegrain: foods, fruits and vegetables, which pass relatively unchanged through our stomach and intestines. Other terms for dietary fibre include 'bulk' and 'roughage', which can be misleading given some forms of fibre are water-soluble and are not bulky or rough at all!



WEIGHT CONTROL

A high-fibre diet is protective against weight gain. Foods high in fibre tend to have a lower energy density, seeing them provide fewer kilojoules per gram of food. As a result, a person eating a fibre-rich diet can consume the same volume of food, but with fewer kilojoules. Soluble fibre slows down the transit time of food through the digestive system, extending the time a person feels full or satisfied after eating.



BENEFITS OF FIBRE

Keeps the Digestive Tract Healthy

Dietary fibre is needed to keep the digestive system healthy. Fibre helps to bulk out the stools through indigestibility (insoluble fibre) and water absorption (soluble fibre). This helps food matter to pass through the body at a slower rate of digestion, keeping you 'regular'.

LOW BLOOD CHOLESTEROL

There is good evidence that soluble fibre reduces cholesterol levels. When cholesterol levels are high, fatty plaques are deposited along the walls of arteries, causing them to narrow dangerously and increase the risk of coronary heart disease. It is thought that soluble fibre lowers blood cholesterol by binding bile acids (which are made from cholesterol) to digest dietary fats and removing them from the bloodstream.

DIABETES MANAGEMENT

For individuals with diabetes, eating a diet high in fibre slows glucose absorption from the small intestine into the bloodstream. This reduces the possibility of surges in the hormone insulin, produced by the pancreas to stabilise blood glucose levels.

CANCER AND HEART MANAGEMENT

Increasing dietary fibre and wholegrains is likely to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, weight gain and obesity, and possible overall mortality, due to the protective effects of phytochemicals (such as antioxidants) found in fruits, vegetables and wholegrains. Fibre is thought to decrease colorectal cancer risk by increasing stool bulk and decreasing food-transit time through the colon.



TYPES OF FIBRE

Found mainly in plant cells, soluble fibre dissolves in water to form a thick gel in your intestines. This can help stabilise blood glucose levels in people with diabetes and lower LDL ('bad') cholesterol levels. Digestion is slowed in the presence of soluble fibre, which can help people feel fuller for longer.

Good sources of soluble fibre include:

- vegetables
- oats
- barley
- seed husks
- peas
- flaxseed
- dried beans
- lentils
- soymilk
- soy products
- fruits

INSOLUBLE FIBRE

Insoluble fibre is made up of the structural parts of plant cell walls. It adds bulk and helps to keep the bowels regular by preventing constipation. Insoluble fibre is found in the hard, scratchy outer skins and surfaces of roots, grains, nuts and seeds which are not easily digested, making them very filling.

Good sources include:

- wheat bran
- rice bran
- skins of fruits and vegetables
- lentils
- nuts and seeds
- dried beans
- wholegrain foods

RESISTANT STARCH

While not traditionally thought of as fibre, this type of starch resists digestion in the small intestine. Once in the large intestine, friendly bacteria ferment resistant starch. This process produces substances that help to keep the lining of the bowel healthy.

Resistant starch can be found in:

- unprocessed cereals and grains
- lentils
- unripe bananas
- pasta
- cooked and cooled potatoes
- sweet potatoes

WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR FIBRE INTAKE:

Problems can arise from a lack of fibre in the diet, including constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, diverticulitis, heart disease and some cancers. A daily intake of 30g or more can be easily achieved through: consumption of wholegrain products, achieving your daily two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables and, instead of low-fibre chips, cakes and biscuits, have nuts or seeds as a snack.

Here are some further tips to incorporate more fibre into your day:

AT BREAKFAST:

- Eat cereals containing wholegrains such as barley, oats, wheat, rye, buckwheat, millet and quinoa
- Add a sprinkle of psyllium husk, chia seeds or ground linseed on top of your cereal, muesli or yogurt
- Add some sliced fruit into your breakfast or have a whole piece on the side
- Switch to multigrain or wholegrain toast instead of white
- Have your eggs with all the veggie sides - cooked tomato, wilted spinach, beans, avocado and mushrooms
- Try a glass of prune juice
- Blend your own juice and leave the pulp in, or if you use a juicer, keep the pulp and turn it into patties or use in soups or stews

AT LUNCH:

- Aim to eat a couple of serves of vegetables in your lunchtime meal
- Opt for wholegrain breads, wraps and rolls
- Sprinkle toasted pumpkin and / or sunflower seeds over salads and soups
- Bring leftovers for lunch - when reheated, leftover pasta, rice and potato turns into resistant starch
- Add some avocado to your sandwich / wrap / salad / leftovers - it goes with most things!

AT DINNER:

- Use wholegrain pasta or try buckwheat, rye or spelt pasta
- Try brown rice and quinoa in place of products like white rice and couscous
- Add tinned chickpeas, lentils or beans to bulk up dishes
- Avoid peeling your carrots, potatoes and sweet potatoes, just give them a good wash
- Use wholemeal flour in cooking, or try some alternative fibre-rich flours like coconut, spelt, buckwheat or almond meal

SNACKS:

- Keep a raw, unsalted nut mix on hand
- Opt for wholegrain or seedy crackers or biscuits
- Try air-popped popcorn for a healthy, high-fibre snack (make your own or buy the pre-made lightly salted version - avoid microwave popcorn)
- Snack on fruits with edible skins like apples, pears and stone fruits
- Have carrot, celery and cucumber sticks with hummus dip
- For something sweet, try Medjool dates filled with almond or peanut butter or make your own 'bliss balls' by blending dates and nuts



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