

DIETARY FIBRE

WHAT IS DIETARY FIBRE?

Dietary fibre is a type of carbohydrate that cannot be digested by our bodies' enzymes. It is found in edible plant foods such as cereals, fruits, vegetables, dried peas, nuts, lentils and grains. Fibre can be either soluble or insoluble and both types play an important role in a healthy diet.¹

WHAT DOES FIBRE DO?

Dietary fibre helps keep the gut healthy and is important in helping to reduce the risk of diseases such as diabetes, coronary heart disease and bowel cancer². Soluble and insoluble fibre work differently but are both important. Fibre reaches the large bowel undigested where it is fermented by bacteria. The by-products of this fermentation are carbon dioxide, methane, hydrogen and shortchain fatty acids (SCFAs). The SCFAs are used by the body. Initially, increasing fibre intake can cause an increase in gas production which can result in bloating. However, depending on the type of fibre chosen, our bodies do adapt and gas production should decrease over time.

WHERE ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FIBRE FOUND?

- > Soluble fibre is found in foods like fruit, oats, beans and barley. When it dissolves in water it forms a gel-like substance. Soluble fibre helps to:
 - > support the growth of friendly bacteria needed to help maintain a healthy gut³
 - > reduce cholesterol absorption by binding to it in the gut²
 - > slow down the time it takes for food to pass through the stomach into the small intestine. This helps slow down the absorption of glucose into the bloodstream and has the benefits of keeping you feeling fuller for longer⁴, and in helping control blood sugar levels, which are important for the management of diabetes²
- > Insoluble fibre does not dissolve in water and is found in foods like wholemeal bread, wheatbran, vegetables and nuts. Insoluble fibre adds bulk to stools by absorbing water, and helps to keep you regular⁴. It is important to increase your fluid intake as you increase fibre. Without fluid, the fibre stays hard, making it difficult to pass.

WHICH FOODS ARE RICH IN FIBRE?

Dietary fibre is found in fruits, vegetables, legumes, wholegrain breads and cereals. Most sources of dietary fibre tend to have a combination of both soluble and insoluble fibre in varying proportions.⁴

Food	Serving size	Total dietary fibre (g)
Baked beans	½ cup	6.6
Untoasted Muesli	½ cup	2.7
Green peas	½ cup	3.4
Almonds	⅓ cup	4.0
Wholemeal pasta	1 cup	8.4
Apple with skin	1 medium piece	2.3
Dried Apricots	3 whole	4.5
Carrot, raw	120g (medium)	4.0
Potato, cooked	1 medium (150g)	2.0
Multigrain bread	2 slices	3.1

Table 1:
Fibre content of common foods.⁵



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DIETARY FIBRE (continued)

To identify packaged foods that are sources of fibre, check the per serve column of the nutrition information panel. A guide used by some food companies is:

1.5g/serve or more = Source of fibre

3g/serve or more = High in fibre

6g/serve or more = Very high fibre

HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED AND IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE TOO MUCH?

On average Australian adults eat 18-25 g of fibre per day and children only 16g per day.²

Population group		Fibre (g/day)
Children	1-3 yr	14
	4-8 yr	18
Boys	9-13 yr	24
	14-18 yr	28
Girls	9-13 yr	20
	14-18 yr	22
Adult Men		30
Adult Women		25
Pregnancy	14-18 yr	25
	19-50 yr	28
Lactation	14-18 yr	30
	19-50 yr	30

Table 2:

Recommended Average Intake for Australia and New Zealand.⁶

It has been suggested that achieving a fibre intake higher than the average can help reduce the risk of disease.

Introducing too much fibre too quickly or eating too much can cause constipation or diarrhoea in some people. It is important to introduce fibre into your diet gradually and ensure that you drink adequate amounts of fluid.

TIPS FOR BOOSTING FIBRE IN YOUR DIET?

It's easy to get more fibre in your diet but remember, if you're going from a low fibre diet then add fibre in slowly and you won't suffer the bloating discomfort than can occur. Try some of these ideas:

- > Change to a breakfast cereal that is high in fibre, add some extra bran, dried fruit or nuts. Porridge oats are also a good choice as they contain soluble fibre.
- > Choose wholegrain or wholemeal bread instead of white. Add variety to sandwiches by including salad items such as lettuce, grated carrots and tomatoes.
- > Curb afternoon cravings by eating fresh fruit with the skin on as a snack.
- > Use wholegrain pasta instead of plain pasta when cooking your favourite pasta dish.
- > Bulk up stews by adding fresh vegetables, barley, lentils and chickpeas.
- > Keep the skin on fruits and vegetables, rather than peeling them. Remember to wash them well first.
- > Top a baked potato with baked beans, or put them in a toasted sandwich (Jaffle).
- > Use brown rice rather than the more refined white rice. Most fibre is contained in the outer layers of grains, the refining process removes these layers.
- > Read food labels to help you select those products that are higher in fibre.

Fact sheet



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Nestlé has always maintained a commitment to advances in nutrition and is continuing this through its partnership with the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) and the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)

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This fact sheet contains general information. Please consult your healthcare professional for specific advice for your personal situation.