Nutrition and Dietetics Department

Fibre

What is dietary fibre?

Fibre is an important component of a balanced diet. It is the part of food that cannot be broken down fully in the stomach, and therefore passes through our system undigested. Fibre can only be found naturally in plant sources and the current recommendation is that we incorporate 30 grams of fibre into our diet per day. All fibre has been proven to be important for our health, digestion, and helping to prevent certain conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, constipation and diverticulitis. Fibre helps to keep your bowel healthy by helping to prevent problems, such as constipation, haemorrhoids (piles) and diverticular disease. However, if you have inflammation of your bowel or have any narrowing, you might want to reduce the amount of fibre in your diet.

Advice for following a high fibre diet

Fibre helps the muscles in your bowels (large and small intestines) to work properly. These muscles move stool (undigested food or faeces) through your body. It adds bulk to, and softens your stool by holding water, helping to prevent or relieve constipation. It helps to promote the growth of healthy bacteria in your bowels, relieving other problems such as haemorrhoids or piles (swollen blood vessels in your back passage), as well as preventing diverticulitis and irritable bowel syndrome. There is also evidence that eating a diet high in fibre can help to lower your cholesterol. High levels of cholesterol are linked blood circulation problems. A high-fibre diet may possibly reduce the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancer, such as bowel cancer.

Advice for following a low fibre diet

A low fibre diet is recommended when people need to avoid foods that may irritate an inflamed bowel or obstruct narrowed parts of the bowel. A low fibre diet may be recommended when experiencing diarrhoea caused by a flare-up of inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease, diverticulitis, ulcerative colitis, or as a result of pelvic radiotherapy or irritable bowel syndrome. A low fibre diet may ease the passage of stools through the bowel when there is an obstruction or stricture or gut rest. The need for a low fibre diet is usually temporary but can sometimes be permanent. However, it is still important to eat as wide a variety of food as possible to ensure good nutrition.

Useful tips for gut health:

- Eat small meals at regular intervals (every three to four hours).
- Chew food slowly and thoroughly.
- Avoid food that is too hot or too cold.
- When introducing new foods, introduce only one at a time. This will help you to rule out foods that aggravate your symptoms.
- Avoid large quantities of caffeine, fizzy drinks or alcohol as these may worsen your symptoms.
- Avoid rich sauces and spicy foods if they worsen your symptoms.
- It is important to maintain a good variety of foods.
- Avoid gristly and fatty meat, tough skin, fish skin and bones as these may worsen your symptoms.
- Aim for at least 6-8 (1.5-2L) glasses of fluid a day. It is important to keep hydrated and drink sufficient fluid especially in warmer weather or when active.

Additional Notes

Foods can vary in fibre content. Please take advice from a dietitian

Food Type	Foods lower in fibre	Foods higher in fibre
Bread and cereals	White bread, English muffins, plain scones and bagels, pancakes, white pitta, plain naan bread, white flour chapatti, poppadoms. Refined breakfast cereal, such as low fibre extruded products like flakes or puffs; rice crispies; rice puffs. White rice/ pasta/ noodles/couscous. Refined flours eg. white flour, refined corn flour, refined buckwheat flour. White rice flakes, bulgar wheat. Sweet biscuits such as tea, plain, malted. Crackers (not wholegrain/wholewheat).	Wholemeal / granary / rye / brown breads. Seeded / nut / fruit breads. Wholemeal chapatti. Fruit / dried fruit muffins / scones / bagels; pastries with fruit / dried fruit. Wholegrain cereals and breakfast cereals such as wheat biscuits, extruded shaped products such as bran flakes, porridge oats, muesli, bran, wheat germ. Brown or wholegrain rice/pasta/noodles. Brown, wholemeal or granary flour, wheat germ, pearl barley, quinoa, oatmeal. Wholegrain or fruit/nut biscuits, flapjacks, digestives, fruit cake, rye crispbreads.
Fruit	All tinned or ripe fresh fruit without skins, pith, seeds or pips. Fruit juices.	All fruit (fresh and frozen) with edible skins and seeds. Fruits higher in fibre tend to have thicker edible skins (eg. apples/pears/black-currants, tinned prunes) or stringy parts (eg. pineapple, mango). All dried fruit. Smoothies made with all parts of whole fruit.
Vegetables	Well cooked fresh, frozen or tinned vegetables - fresh only with peel, seeds, stringy parts and stalks removed. Sieved tomato and vegetable sauces, such as passata and tomato puree. Small portion of soft raw salad items that cannot be peeled such as lettuce, de-seeded peppers. Strained vegetable juices.	All vegetables and salad items with peel, stalks/stems, seeds. Vegetables eaten with tougher hulls/skins, pith, stringy parts and stalks and those eaten raw tend to be higher in fibre, such as celery, sweetcorn, cucumber, kale, sprouts,peas, broadbeans. Beans and pulses - see section on protein foods.
Milk and milk products	Milk (all types), cream, sour cream, crème fraiche, fromage frais, smooth yoghurt, All types of cheese without rind.	Any milk products containing fruits, nuts, seeds or cereals.
Protein-rich foods	All meats and fish; eggs; tofu; well cooked red split lentils without hulls; seitan.	Beans and pulses eg. baked beans, kidney beans, soya beans, chickpeas, peas, butter beans. Tempeh; Quorn products. Vegetable and bean-based alternatives such as vegetarian/vegan sausages, burgers.
Desserts	Custard, ice cream, milk puddings. Clear jelly. Plain cakes.	Ice cream containing fruit and nuts, cakes, puddings and pies containing any of the following: wholemeal flour, dried fruit, nuts, dried coconut and any fruits you have been advised to avoid.
Drinks	Clear or smooth fruit & vegetable juices, milk, water, soft drinks, tea, coffee.	Fruit and vegetable juices with pulp or bits.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

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If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

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Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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براہِ مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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