

High Fiber Diet

Background:

Dietary fiber comes from plants and grains. Dietary fiber is not digested by the stomach or small intestine, but arrives unchanged in the colon where it has two main benefits: promoting regularity and providing nourishment for beneficial bacteria.

Types of Dietary Fiber:

There are two main types of dietary fiber:

- **Soluble fiber:** This fiber consists of carbohydrates and dissolves in water. These fibers are fermented by colon bacteria and used as nourishment and a food source. Foods that contain soluble fiber include fruits, vegetables, oats, barley, and legumes (peas and beans).
- **Insoluble fiber:** This fiber does not dissolve in water. It retains water and helps to promote softer, bulkier stool. Foods that contain insoluble fiber include wheat, rye, and other grains. All plant fiber has both insoluble and soluble fiber, although the amount of each can vary. Wheat and corn fiber are 90 percent insoluble fiber, while oats are about half insoluble and half soluble fiber. The recommended amount of dietary fiber is 25-35 grams per day.

Health Benefits of Dietary Fiber:

Consuming the recommended amount of daily dietary fiber has been linked to many health benefits including:

- Increased calcium absorption
- Reduced triglyceride levels
- Controlled appetite and weight
- Reduced colon polyp and cancer risk factors
- Improved bowel regularity
- Increased bone density
- Reduced allergies and asthma
- Decreased flatus (gas) smell

What Foods ARE HIGH in Dietary Fiber?

- Whole grain breads
- Fresh fruits, including skin and pulp
- Dried or stewed fruits, such as prunes
- Root vegetables such as carrots, turnips and yams
- Cruciferous fresh vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cabbage
- Cereals

While a high fiber diet can improve your health, there are many people who do better by not increasing fiber in their diet. Therefore, attempting a high fiber diet without physician supervision is not recommended. Your healthcare provider is the best source of information for questions and concerns related to your health.