

# Nutrition News

## Information for Senior Citizens

Developed by Colorado State University Extension  
Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition

### What is Dietary Fiber?

Dietary Fiber is the portion of plants that cannot be digested by our bodies. Animal products such as meat and dairy do not contain fiber.

So if our bodies don't digest fiber, why do we need it? Well, fiber has been shown to . . .

- ✓ Treat and prevent constipation, hemorrhoids and diverticulosis
- ✓ Decrease blood cholesterol levels
- ✓ Decrease risk of coronary heart disease
- ✓ Decrease risk of colon cancer

The fiber we get from food is called dietary fiber. On the other hand, fiber that is synthetically made or that is added to foods is called functional fiber. Regardless of the source, scientists have shown that fiber is beneficial to your health.

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### Soluble vs. Insoluble Fiber

**Soluble Fiber:** Soluble fiber forms a gel-like substance in your intestines. This gel carries away *bile acids* so that they are eliminated in your stools rather than converted to cholesterol. Therefore, soluble fiber helps decrease your risk of heart disease by decreasing your blood cholesterol levels. Soluble fiber also slows down the absorption of sugars, which is helpful for people with diabetes. Beans, oat bran, fruit and vegetables are good sources of soluble fiber.



**Insoluble Fiber:** Insoluble fiber absorbs water like a sponge. It is beneficial to the health of your digestive tract by making your stools soft and bulky and by speeding up the passage of food through your body. These actions of insoluble fiber help prevent constipation, hemorrhoids, and diverticulosis.

In addition, a diet high in insoluble fiber may decrease your risk of cancer, especially colon cancer. Many of the foods you eat naturally contain particles which may cause cancer. Without fiber, these foods stay in your body longer, and therefore so do the cancer-causing particles. By moving these foods through your intestines quickly you decrease your risk of cancer. Wheat bran and whole grains contain the most insoluble fiber, but vegetables and beans are also good sources.



## How Much Fiber Do I Need?

The amount of fiber you need depends on your gender and age. Women over the age of 51 should consume 21 grams a day and older men should consume 30 grams a day.

Different foods contain different amounts of fiber. Use the table below as a guide to help you consume the fiber you need.

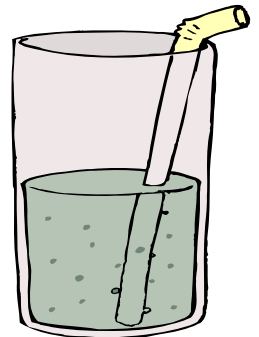
Breads, cereals, grains	Fiber, grams
1 slice whole wheat bread	3
1/3 cup All-Bran	5
1 cup oatmeal, cooked	2
1 medium bran muffin	2
6" corn tortilla	1
8" flour tortilla	1
1/2 cup cooked brown rice	2
<b>Fruit</b>	
3" apple with peel	4
1 medium banana	3
5 dried figs	12
1 medium orange	3
1 medium pear	5
5 prunes	6
<b>Vegetables, cooked</b>	
1/2 cup green beans	2
1/2 cup chopped broccoli	3.5
1/2 cup beets	2
1/2 cup cabbage	2
1/2 cup carrots	3
1/2 cup cauliflower	1.5
1 8-inch stalk celery	1
1/2 cup corn	5
1/2 cup peas	1.5
5" baked potato with skin	4.5
1/2 cup spinach	3
1 small tomato	1.5
<b>Beans, dried &amp; cooked</b>	
1 cup pinto, navy & black beans	16
1 cup garbanzo, black-eyed peas, lentils & split peas	9
Refried beans	22

## Replace Expensive Laxatives with Fruits and Vegetables

Many people use laxatives to relieve constipation. For some people, laxatives are so effective that they come to depend on them. Over time however, laxatives damage your intestines by making them weak and flabby. When this happens your intestines are not able to move food properly and you are forced to use laxatives.

A better way to relieve constipation is to eat a diet high in fiber. We have already learned that people over the age of 51 should consume 20-30 grams of fiber each day. However, the average American gets only 10 grams a day. Increasing the number of fruit and vegetables in your diet is an easy way to get the fiber you need.

When eating a diet high in fiber be sure to drink lots of water. Plenty of water is needed so the fiber particles can soak it up and make your stools soft and bulky.



### Quick Tip:

For more information on fiber, call your local county Extension office. In Colorado, request Colorado State University's Fact Sheet on Dietary Fiber 9.333 or find the fact sheet online at

[http://www.ext.colostate.edu/PUBS/FOOD\\_NUT/09333.html](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/PUBS/FOOD_NUT/09333.html).

You can also call *the National Institute of Aging* at 1-800-222-2225. Ask for the *Age Page* entitled "Constipation," or check it out online at—

<http://www.niapublications.org/engagepage/s/const.asp>.

## Sample Menu



### Breakfast

- 1/3 cup All-Bran (5 g fiber)
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 1 Easy Bran Muffin (2 g fiber)
- 1 banana (3 g fiber)

### Snack

- 1 medium apple (4 g fiber)

### Lunch

- Bean Burrito- 8" flour tortilla, 1/4 cup refried beans, 1 oz cheese (6 g fiber)
- 1 cup raw spinach salad (2 g fiber)
- 1/2 cup raw carrots (2 g fiber)
- 1 tablespoon light salad dressing

### Snack

- 2 tablespoons mixed nuts (1 g fiber)

### Dinner

- 1 cup quick bean soup (7 g fiber)
- 1 whole wheat roll (3 g fiber)

**Total = 35 grams fiber**

## Easy Bran Muffins

### Ingredients:

3/4 cup low-fat milk  
1 cup oat or wheat bran  
1/2 cup raisins  
1 cup whole wheat flour

1/4 cup sugar  
2 tsp baking powder  
1/4 tsp salt  
1 egg, beaten  
1 1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Combine milk, bran, and raisins in a small bowl; let soak.
3. In another mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt; mix well.
4. In a third bowl, combine egg and applesauce. Add dry ingredients and bran mixture, stir just until blended.
5. Line muffin cups with paper liners or spray cups with cooking spray. Fill muffin cups 2/3 cup full. Bake 20-25 minutes.

**Yields 12 muffins (2 g fiber per muffin)**

## Quick Bean Soup

### Ingredients:

1 tsp vegetable oil  
1 clove garlic  
1/2 cup each, chopped onion,  
green pepper and sliced carrot

1 15-oz can pinto beans, drained  
1 15-oz can chopped tomatoes with juice  
1 10-oz can low fat, low sodium chicken broth  
1/4 tsp each pepper and ground cumin

### Directions:

1. Heat oil in 3-quart saucepan, add garlic and onion and fry for 2 minutes.
2. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil.
3. Cover and reduce heat to low; simmer 25-35 minutes, until vegetables are tender.

**Yields 4-1 cup servings (7 g fiber per serving)**

## **Fitness Focus: Staying Active Prevents Constipation**

Did you know that staying active can help prevent constipation? It's true--regular, rhythmic exercise increases the muscle tone of your entire body and also strengthens the muscles of the bowels. Stronger bowel muscles mean that they can work harder. A combination of exercise, a high fiber diet and drinking plenty of water can help you stay free from constipation.

What kinds of activities tone the body? Well, think of something you enjoy doing that causes your heart to beat faster--square dancing, for example, or swimming. Raking the lawn, hoeing a garden, climbing stairs are all good activities for helping keep in shape. If you live in an apartment, you might want to check with the nearest YMCA or senior center for any programs they may offer. You can also call your county Cooperative Extension office and ask about exercise programs and activities.

Try to find an activity close to your house to keep you moving. If you live in the country, find a quiet path to explore. A daily walk offers new sights and sounds, especially as the seasons change. If you live in town, maybe there's a park you could walk to. It's even more fun with a friend, inviting a friend on a walk can be a perfect opportunity to catch up on each other's lives and maybe even enjoy a cup of coffee together after your walk.

If there's a mall walkers club in your area, join it. It's a great way to meet people and make new friends--and you can keep exercising in all kinds of weather.

If you have a VCR, there are some exciting new exercise video tapes especially for seniors--home exercise is convenient, especially when the weather is bad.



### ***Senior Resource:***

#### **How do Food Stamp benefits work?**

Each Food Stamp recipient receives an EBT – Electronic Benefits Transfer card. You will need this card to purchase food in the grocery store. The EBT card looks like a credit card. Each month benefits you are eligible to receive are posted on the card. A person cannot buy food without the card. If you lose your EBT card, you should immediately contact your local Food Stamp office.

For more information and to find out if you or someone you know qualifies for Food Stamps, call 1-800-221-5689.