

The Importance of Fiber in Your Diet

Tips for Choosing Foods

Adding Fiber

Fiber is the part of plant food that is not broken down or digested in our bodies

"Roughage" is another term often used. It is found in the structural part of plants—the skin, roots, stems, leaves, and seeds

There are some major benefits to using more fiber in our diets.

These include

- A full and satisfied feeling that helps to control our appetites and helps with weight loss.
- High fiber foods are many times lower in calories, another benefit for those losing weight or keeping it off.
- Bowel regularity is improved. In addition to feeling more comfortable, the risks of colon cancer may be reduced
- Certain types of fiber—especially those found in oat bran, some fruits (such as apples and oranges) dry beans, peas and legumes—slow down how fast glucose is absorbed in the body. This type of fiber may have an effect on lowering blood glucose levels
- Yet another benefit may be a decrease in blood cholesterol and triglycerides, the blood fats that increase risks for heart disease.

How much fiber should we eat? Most people get 10 to 15 grams per day. We recommend increasing this to 25 to 40 grams per day.

To get more fiber, use whole grains, cereals and breads, vegetables, dried peas and beans and fruits. **(There is no fiber in dairy products, meats, fish, poultry or fats.)**

High Fiber Diet

Rationale: To provide a diet which increases the intake of bulk and fiber. A high fiber diet helps to prevent constipation and may be beneficial in reducing the risk of colon cancer and lowering blood cholesterol.

Description: The term fiber is used to define the part of plants that is not digested by human enzymes or absorbed by the human gastrointestinal tract. These include cellulose, hemicellulose, mucilages, pectins, and gums lignin.

A high fiber diet is a normal diet altered to minimize the intake of refined foods and to encourage the consumption of whole grains, legumes, nuts, fresh fruits, and vegetables.

The fiber content of the diet should be increased gradually so the gastrointestinal tract can adjust to the change. Increased fiber intake may initially cause gas and abdominal distention. Increasing fiber intake gradually, in small amounts, can reduce these symptoms and promote balance to the diet.

The ideal fiber intake has not been defined, but estimates range from 25 to 50 grams per day. Fiber from a variety of sources is the most beneficial.

Adequacy: The diet will meet the nutrition needs as recommended by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council.

Recommendations

1. Eat a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, grains, and legumes on a regular basis. Keep them in their natural (unprocessed) form and leave the seeds and skins intact
2. Choose whole-grain breads and cereals. Decrease your consumption of refined crackers, breads, and cereals. Read food labels carefully and look for whole-grain (not white) flour as the first item on the ingredients list.
3. Sprinkle cereal mixtures on cottage cheese, yogurt, fruits or mix them in with cooked cereals juices, soups, or stews.
4. Dried beans, peas, and lentils are excellent sources of fiber and can be used in a wide variety of dishes.
5. Select snacks which are high in fiber such as fresh fruits and vegetables, popcorn, dried fruits, raisins, and whole grain crackers



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