

Nourishing Notes

Fibre Facts

What Is Fibre and Where Does It Come From?

Fibre is found only in plant foods. We can't digest it, but it's an important part of our diet needed to maintain good health. There are two main kinds of fibre: **soluble** and **insoluble**. All plants contain both kinds of fibre, however, some have more of one than the other.

Soluble Fibre

Soluble fibre dissolves in water and is found in dried peas, beans and lentils, grains such as oats, barley and psyllium, and certain fruits and vegetables including apples, plums, oranges, strawberries, Brussels sprouts and carrots. This kind of fibre helps lower blood cholesterol and control blood sugar levels.

Insoluble Fibre

Insoluble fibre holds water like a sponge and helps prevent constipation by making stools bulkier and easier to pass. It also helps to prevent bowel problems like diverticulosis and hemorrhoids and may lower the risk of some cancers.

How Much Fibre Do We Need?

Canadians eat an average of 15 grams of dietary fibre daily, which is far less than the recommended amount. See the chart below to find out how much fibre you need daily based on the Dietary Reference Intakes.

Age (years)	Males (grams/day)	Females (grams/day)
1-3	19	19
4-8	25	25
9-13	31	26
14-18	38	25
19-50	38	25
Over 50	30	21
Pregnancy		28
Breastfeeding		29

When you start to add more fibre to your diet, do so gradually. Be sure to drink more water and other fluids. Adding too much fibre too soon can lead to bloating, gas, and discomfort.

Fibre is important for:

- Reaching and keeping a healthy weight
- Managing bowel disorders
- Reducing risk of some cancers
- Reducing risk of heart disease
- Managing diabetes

Tips to Boost Your Fibre Intake

- Add natural bran & fruit chunks to hot and cold cereals, yogurt and puddings.
- Add oatmeal, oat bran, natural bran, chopped fruit, raisins, nuts and seeds to home-baked muffins, breads and cookies.
- Eat the skins of vegetables and fruit when possible (e.g., grapes, cucumber).
- Thicken soups and stews with barley, brown rice, legumes and vegetables.
- Replace 1/3 of the white flour in recipes with whole wheat flour.
- Enjoy higher fibre snacks more often: vegetable sticks, fruit, bran, oatmeal or oat bran muffins, almonds, and whole grain crackers with peanut butter.
- Eat bean-based meals like chili or baked beans 2 or 3 times a week.
- Choose whole grain products rather than white.

