

# NUTRITION KEYNOTES

## Tips to Increase Fiber



**Goal:** To increase fiber in your diet to 25 to 35 grams each day. Fiber helps lower blood cholesterol, control blood sugar, manage diverticulosis and irritable bowel syndrome, prevent constipation, and may decrease the risk of colon cancer.

### What Is Fiber?

Fiber is the part of the plant that is not digested. It is found in foods that come from plants, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, cooked beans, split peas, and lentils.

High-fiber foods add bulk to your diet, which helps you feel full. They also tend to be lower in calories and fat than processed foods.

### Cooked Beans, Split Peas, and Lentils

*(Average 3 to 7 grams of fiber per serving)*

**Eat often. One serving is ½ cup cooked.**

- Use beans in salads, soups, and casseroles.
- Main dish ideas: bean burrito, chili, split pea or lentil soup.

### Whole-Grain Breads, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta

*(Aim for foods with 3 or more grams of fiber per serving; read labels)*

**Eat 6 to 11 servings a day. One serving is 1 slice of bread, ¾ cup of cold cereal, or ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta.**

- Eat breads and cereals that list whole wheat, rye, or corn as the first ingredient.
- Choose bran cereals, oats, brown rice, bulgur, quinoa, ground flaxseeds, chia seeds, whole-wheat pastas, whole-wheat tortillas, and popcorn.

- Try unprocessed wheat or oat bran. Start with 1 teaspoon per meal. Slowly increase to 2 to 4 tablespoons a day. Add to cereals, soups, casseroles, and other foods.

### Vegetables and Fruits

*(2 to 4 grams of fiber per serving)*

**Eat 5 or more servings a day. One serving is ½ cup cooked, 1 cup raw, or 1 medium piece.**

- Eat the edible skins and seeds—they have most of the fiber.
- Try fresh or dried fruit for dessert or snacks. Keep cut-up vegetables on hand.

### Additional Tips

- It's best to get your fiber from natural whole foods.
- *Slowly* add fiber to your diet. If you add it too fast, you may feel pain from gas or bloating. Aim for two high-fiber foods at each meal.
- **Drink at least 8 glasses of water or other liquids each day.**
- Talk to your physician if you are considering taking a fiber supplement.
- If you have diverticulitis, you will need to follow a fiber-restricted diet until your symptoms go away.

For more information, please contact your registered dietitian or local Health Education Department.

### Sample Menu

#### Breakfast

- 1 cup oatmeal (4 grams fiber)
- 2 Tbsp. raisins (2 grams)
- 1 slice whole-grain toast (3 grams)
- 2 Tbsp. natural peanut butter (2 grams)
- 1% low-fat milk (0 grams)
- coffee or tea (0 grams)

#### Lunch

- 1 cup lentil soup (5 grams)
- 7 small whole-wheat crackers (3 grams)
- ½ cup raw carrots (2 grams)
- 1 medium apple (2 grams)
- 1% low-fat milk (0 grams)

#### Dinner

- 2 cups green salad with raw vegetables and ½ cup garbanzo beans (9.5 grams)

- 2 Tbsp. salad dressing (0 grams)
- 3 oz. broiled skinless chicken breast (0 grams)
- 1 cup baked yams (5.5 grams)
- ½ cup steamed broccoli (2 grams)
- 1 cup strawberries (3 grams)
- 1 tsp. trans-fat-free margarine (0 grams)

**Total = 43 grams fiber**