

# Fiber Food Facts

“Eat more fiber” - is a phrase often heard in nutrition news. According to the International Food Information Council’s 2015 Food & Health Survey, fiber ranks second on the list of things people are trying to eat more of. (Funny thing, whole grains took top spot and it contains fiber as well.) So let’s start with the basics such as how much do you need and what do all those terms mean - soluble, insoluble, high-fiber, whole grain.

Fiber is known to reduce risk of heart disease and diabetes because the body doesn’t break down fiber so it won’t increase blood sugar levels and it absorbs ‘bad’ LDL cholesterol and ushers it out of the body. Institute of Medicine recommends women get 25 grams of fiber a day and men should shoot for at least 38 grams.

**Soluble fiber** absorbs water and bulks up in your stomach which promotes a feeling of fullness plus acting like a sponge on cholesterol. Good sources are beans and lentils, as well as carrots, oatmeal, apples and citrus fruits.

**Insoluble fiber** is like nature’s broom. It speeds up passage of waste through your digestive tract and is often referred as ‘roughage’ because it comes from woody, or structural plants such as broccoli stems, outer kernel of corn, and whole grain cereals as well as skins and seeds of fruits and vegetables.

As long as you eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, beans and whole grains you will get the benefits of both. That’s where reading labels comes in. In order to be ‘**high fiber**’ a food must contain at least 5 grams per serving. **Whole grains** can give a false sense of fiber richness...they are definitely more nutritious containing bran, germ, and endosperm, but it does not guarantee that it’s high in fiber. Whole grains should be listed first on the nutrition label. If the label reads refined wheat then bran which contains the fiber has been removed. If the label reads ‘enriched’ it means vitamins and iron are added back in the processing but fiber isn’t. It’s tricky reading that label!!

Here is a one day snapshot of how you can up your intake of fiber.

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