

Fibre Facts

What is dietary fibre?

Dietary fibre is the part of plant foods that our bodies can't fully digest and absorb. Fibre has many benefits and we need it for good health. Most Canadians eat only half the fibre they need.

There are different types of fibre. Most foods that contain fibre have more than one type.

Soluble fibre dissolves in water, turning into a thick gel. It can help lower your blood cholesterol and control blood sugars. It may also help with diarrhea by making your stool thicker.

Good sources of soluble fibre are:

- apples, apple sauce
- avocado
- barley
- carrots
- chia and flax seeds
- edamame
- legumes such as split peas, beans, and lentils
- oat bran, oatmeal
- oranges
- pears
- psyllium
- sweet potato
- white potato

Insoluble fibre doesn't dissolve in water. It helps stool move through your bowel more quickly and keeps bowel movements regular. This keeps your digestive system healthy and may lower your risk of getting heart disease and certain types of cancers (like colon cancer).

Good sources of insoluble fibre are:

- wheat bran
- corn bran
- nuts
- vegetables, fruits
- whole grain foods such as whole grain breads and cereals

Inulin is another type of fibre. It may help healthy bacteria grow in your large bowel and prevent constipation. More research is needed to know if inulin improves bowel health or if it has the same health benefits as other kinds of fibre.

Inulin is added to some cereals, granola bars, pasta, and yogurts. Natural sources of inulin include bananas, onions, leeks, garlic, asparagus, and chicory root.

How much fibre do I need?

How much fibre you need depends on your age and gender (see the table below).

Age (years)	Males (grams each day)	Females (grams each day)
1–3	19	19
4–8	25	25
9–13	31	26
14–18	38	26
19–50	38	25
50+	30	21
Pregnant		28
Breastfeeding		29

How much fluid do I need?

It's important to drink enough fluid when you eat a higher fibre diet. Drinking fluid will help keep your stools soft. The table below shows how much fluid you should have every day. Fluid includes water and other liquids such as milk, juice, coffee, tea, broth, and soup.

Age (years)	Males	Females
1–3	4 cups (900 mL)	4 cups (900 mL)
4–8	5 cups (1.2 L)	5 cups (1.2 L)
9–13	7 cups (1.8 L)	6 cups (1.6 L)
14–18	10 cups (2.6 L)	7 cups (1.8 L)
19+	12 cups (3 L)	9 cups (2.2 L)
Pregnant		10 cups (2.5 L)
Breastfeeding		12 cups (3 L)

Tips to get enough fluid

- Carry a filled water bottle to remind you to drink water throughout the day.
- Have a glass of milk with your meals or for a snack.
- Drink a cup of tea or coffee with your breakfast.

Tips to help you eat more fibre

Vegetables and Fruit

- Have a vegetable or fruit at every meal and snack.
- Eat the skins or peels when possible.
- Add fresh or dried fruit to cereal, yogurt, and baked goods.
- Choose whole vegetables and fruit instead of juice. Juice is low in fibre. If you drink juice, limit it to ½ cup (125 mL) per day.
- Use extra vegetables in casseroles, soups, stir-fries, and pasta sauces.



Grain Products

- Choose whole grain breads and cereals, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat couscous, quinoa, barley, bulgur, and brown rice.
- Eat high fibre cereal either by itself or mixed with another cereal.
- Sprinkle 1–2 Tbsp (15–30 mL) high fibre cereal on yogurt, applesauce, puddings, salads, or casseroles.
- Add wheat bran to ground meat dishes, casseroles, cereals, or baking.
- Use higher fibre flours such as whole grain wheat, oat, or barley flour when cooking or baking at home.

Meat Alternatives

- Add beans, chickpeas, and lentils to soups, casseroles, salads, and pasta sauce.
- Add 2 Tbsp (30 mL) ground flax, whole chia seeds, hemp seeds, or ¼ cup (60 mL) of nuts to salads, soups, or yogurt.



Eat more fibre each day over a few weeks until you reach the amount you need. To prevent gas and bloating, spread higher fibre foods over your day and drink more fluid.

Read food labels

Food labels have information about how much fibre is in the food. Read nutrition claims and compare Nutrition Facts tables to help you choose foods higher in fibre. Look for foods with the nutrition claims below:

Fibre claims	Amount of fibre per serving
Very high source	6 grams or more
High source	4 grams or more
Source	2 grams or more

The **Nutrition Facts** table shows the amount of fibre and the % Daily Value (% DV) for fibre. The higher % DV, the more fibre there is in 1 serving. Choose foods with more fibre.

Serving size →		Nutrition Facts	
		Per 250 mL (34 g)	
Amount		% Daily Value	
Calories	120		
Fat	0.5 g	2 %	
	Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	1 %	
Cholesterol	0 mg		
Sodium	210 mg	10 %	
Carbohydrate	28 g	9 %	
	Fibre 5 g	20 %	← Value for fibre
	Sugars 5 g		
Protein	4 g		
Vitamin A		0 %	
Calcium		0 %	
Iron		30 %	

Choose foods with 2 g or more fibre per serving →




Choose foods with a higher % Daily Value for fibre ←

Cautions:

While you're pregnant, you can eat flax seed once in a while but not every day. Not enough is known about how safe flax seed is for pregnant women.

For children under 4 years: Some foods can cause choking. Foods like hard raw vegetables can be grated, cut into small pieces, or cooked to make them safe. Don't give foods such as whole nuts or seeds, popcorn, and dried fruit to children under 4 years.

Choose higher fibre foods, and spread them over your day.

Fibre source	Very high source 6 grams or more of fibre per serving	High source 4 grams or more of fibre per serving	Source 2 grams or more of fibre per serving
<p>Vegetables and Fruit</p> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • artichoke, cooked, medium • blackberries, raspberries, ½ cup (125 mL) • pear with skin, medium • peas, green, ½ cup (125 mL) • potato, baked with skin, medium, ½ cup (125 mL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apple, banana, kiwi, nectarine, orange, fresh, medium or ½ cup (125 mL) • avocado, ¼ medium • apricots, fresh (3) • blueberries, strawberries, rhubarb, ½ cup (125 mL) • broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, corn, green beans, okra, parsnip, Swiss chard, spinach, sweet potato, turnip, winter squash, ½ cup (125 mL) • dried fruit: apricots, dates, figs, prunes, ¼ cup (60 mL) • grapefruit, papaya, ½ medium
<p>Grain Products</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% bran cereal (non-flake), ½ cup (125 mL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amaranth, cornmeal, millet, oat bran, teff, cooked, ¾ cup (175 mL) • bran flakes, ¾ cup (175 mL) • oat bran muffin, homemade, medium • wheat bran, natural, 2 Tbsp (30 mL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bran muffin, homemade, medium • bread: whole grain whole wheat, rye, pumpernickel, 1 slice • oatmeal, cooked, ¾ cup (175 mL) • pita, roti, naan, whole wheat, ½ • popcorn, air-popped, 2 cups (500 mL) • wheat germ, 2 Tbsp (30 mL) • whole grains: barley, bulgur, cracked wheat, buckwheat, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, medium grain, cooked, ½ cup (125 mL)
<p>Meat Alternatives</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beans or lentils, cooked, ¾ cup (175 mL) • chia seeds, 2 Tbsp (30 mL) • chickpeas, cooked, ¾ cup (175 mL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • almonds, brazil nuts, hazelnuts, pumpkin, sesame and sunflower seeds, ¼ cup (60 mL) • edamame (green soybeans), ½ cup (125 mL) • split pea soup, 1 cup (250 mL) • split peas, cooked, ¾ cup (175 mL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flax seed, ground 2 Tbsp (30 mL) • hemp hearts, 2 Tbsp (30 mL) • hummus, ¼ cup (60 mL) • macadamia, peanuts, pecans, pistachios, ¼ cup (60 mL) • peanut butter, 2 Tbsp (30 mL)

A high fibre day

Eating enough fibre each day may be easier than you think. Check out the sample menu below to see how you and your family can get the fibre you need.

Breakfast	Grams of fibre
1 medium banana	2
1 cup (250 mL) bran flakes	5
1 cup (250 mL) 1% milk	0
Morning Snack	
½ whole grain pita	2½
¼ cup (60 mL) hummus	3
Lunch	
Tuna Sandwich:	
2 ½ oz (75 g) tuna	0
2 slices whole grain bread	5½
1 tsp (5 mL) margarine	0
1 cup (250 mL) water	0
1 medium orange	2½
Afternoon Snack	
8 baby carrots	1½
2 Tbsp (30 mL) almonds	2
Dinner	
2½ oz (75 g) grilled chicken breast	0
1 cup (250 mL) medium grain brown rice	4
1 cup (250 mL) cooked broccoli	4
1 medium tomato, sliced	1½
1 cup (250 mL) milk	0
½ cup (125 mL) raspberries	4
Evening Snack	
1 medium fresh pear with skin	5
½ cup (125 mL) plain 1% (M.F.)** yogurt	0
Total grams of fibre	42½

*Values for fibre are approximate ** M.F. = Milk Fat

My high fibre day

Using the table of fibre foods to help, write a 1 day menu that's high in fibre. Make sure to choose foods you like to eat.

Breakfast	Grams of fibre
Morning Snack	
Lunch	
Afternoon Snack	
Dinner	
Evening Snack	
Total grams of fibre	

For more information

For more information you can search for [Fibre](http://Dietitians.ca) at Dietitians.ca