



# FUEL YOUR BODY WITH FIBER

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## What is Fiber?

Fiber can be considered the forgotten macronutrient, as it has been overshadowed by protein, fat, and carbohydrates in the past. Fiber, also called dietary fiber, is actually a type of carbohydrate that is not digestible by the body. It is found primarily in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes and seeds. You have probably heard that fiber is good for your gut, but did you know it can prevent and manage many diseases? Numerous studies have found that eating fiber rich foods as a part of the daily diet has been linked with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, some gastrointestinal (GI) disorders, and has been shown to support weight management and satiety. Fiber has many roles in the body, some of which include regulating your blood sugar and cholesterol levels, or even feeding the good bacteria in your colon. Let's discuss some of the health benefits of eating fiber!

## Benefits of Fiber

1. Improves digestive health
2. Helps prevent constipation
3. Promotes satiety - keeps you feeling full
4. Helps to lower cholesterol
5. Helps control/regulate the blood sugar
6. Reduces your risk of developing some cancers
7. Has been shown to lower blood pressure
8. Reduces your risk for cardiovascular disease

# Types of Fiber

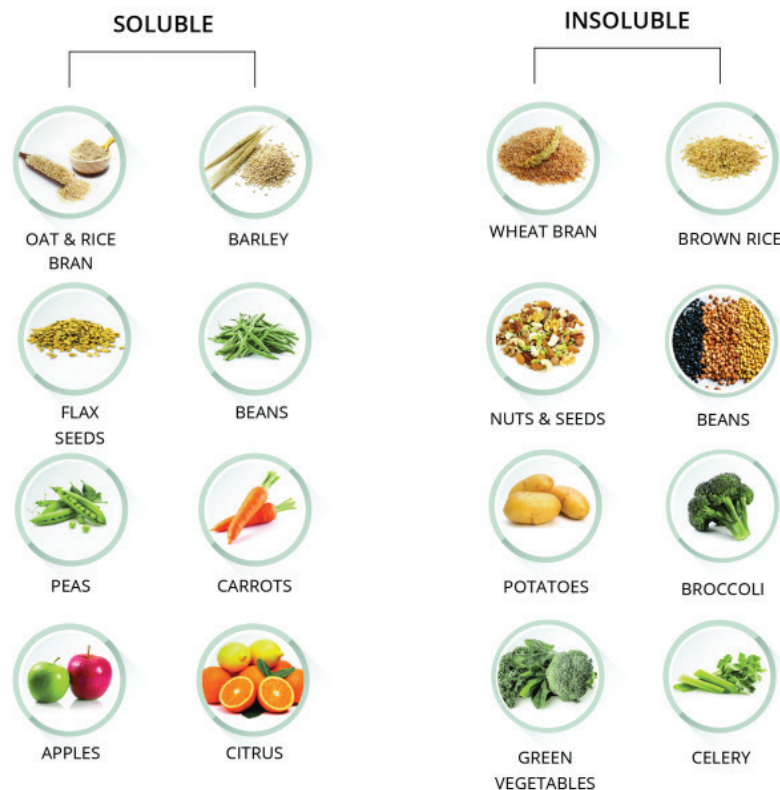
There are many different types of fiber, yet they all behave differently in our bodies and have their own distinct properties. One way to categorize fiber is by its solubility, or its ability to dissolve in water. Soluble fiber is dissolvable in water and can attach to cholesterol and remove it from the body through the stool, ultimately lowering cholesterol levels. Some soluble fibers, such as the pectins found in fruits like strawberries, form a gel in your GI tract and feed the good bacteria that live in your colon! Much like the gel that forms in your gut, pectins derived from fruits are often used in a similar way to make jams and marmalades or even added to some foods as a thickening agent. As you can see, fiber plays a huge role in gut health, but also in how we make some of our processed foods on the market today.

Insoluble fiber, like its name sounds, is not dissolvable in water, but instead stays in the digestive tract and attracts water into your gut. This helps promote regular bowel movements by keeping the stools soft and providing bulk. For this reason, insoluble fibers are useful for people who struggle with constipation. An example of a type of insoluble fiber is cellulose, which is found in the cell walls of plants such as beans.

Many plant foods contain varying amounts of both soluble and insoluble fiber. The best example of this can be found in nature's genius design of most fruits: the skins have higher proportions of insoluble fiber, while the flesh has higher proportions of soluble fiber.

# Good Sources of Fiber

As mentioned earlier, foods rich in fiber include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes and seeds. You can find fiber in many different plants, here are a few examples of good sources of fiber:



## How Much Fiber Do I need

According to the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 90% of women and 97% of men do not meet the daily recommended intake of fiber, meaning that they do not consume enough fiber in their diet. We now know how important fiber is to maintain gut health and prevent disease, so why are so many people not eating enough of it? How much fiber do YOU need to eat?

The amount of fiber you need in your diet varies throughout your lifespan: women aged 19-30 years old should consume about 28g of fiber daily, while men aged 19-30 years old should consume about 34g of fiber daily. Here is an example of some fiber rich foods you can try to incorporate into your day that would provide 34g of fiber, enough to meet or exceed the needs for the average American.

### Breakfast

- 1 cup of Raisin bran cereal is 7g of fiber
- An apple is about 3g of fiber

### Lunch

- 1 cup of of whole grain pasta is around 5g of fiber
- 1 cup of broccoli contains about 3g of fiber

### Dinner

- 1 cup of lentils contains about 16 g of fiber

Keep in mind that fiber is found in a variety of plant foods, these are only a few examples. Start exploring what your favorite sources of fiber are! Reading the fiber section on the nutrition label is a great place to start.

#### Sources:

Gropper, S. S., Smith, J. L., & Carr, T. P. (2017). Chapter 4, Fiber. In *Advanced nutrition and human metabolism* (7th ed., pp. 107–120). Cengage Learning.

U.S. Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>