

Fill Up with Fiber

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Fiber is one of your greatest allies in weight loss. Fiber slows down stomach emptying so it can help you feel fuller longer by keeping ghrelin suppressed. Ghrelin is the appetite-signaling hormone produced by the stomach. Fiber also helps balance blood sugar by reducing the blood sugar and subsequent insulin response to a meal. Remember that when insulin and blood sugar are kept in check your body is able to then access stored body fat to use as fuel. Fiber is also great for lowering your risk for heart disease as it can create a better cholesterol ratio by raising HDL and lowering LDL cholesterol. Because it improves transit time through the intestinal tract, softens stools and increases stool bulk, it reduces the risk of colon cancer and other gastrointestinal diseases including diverticulitis.

Add fiber rich foods to your 3 meals and if needed, use a fiber supplement to ensure that you take in 50 or more grams per day. A word of caution here: Bring up your fiber intake gradually over the course of a week or two (or even three if you are recovering from a long term low fiber diet) and be sure to increase your daily water intake as you increase your fiber intake. Fiber helps keep you regular. But, when you initially increase it or if you increase it too quickly, you may find yourself a bit constipated as your body adjusts. If this happens, increase your water intake, get some exercise and soak in an Epsom salts bath.

HEALTHY BITE Fiber supports appetite reduction. It is also a natural laxative.

NEWS FLASH: Americans eat an average of 5-14 grams of fiber daily, way short of the 20-35 grams recommended by the American Dietetic Association and the 50 grams or more recommended in the Overcoming Weight Loss Resistance Program.

HEALTHY BITE Fiber helps lower LDL cholesterol and triglycerides* and raise HDL cholesterol.

*Triglycerides are the body's storage form for fat. Most triglycerides are found in adipose (fat) tissue. High circulating levels in the blood stream have been linked to heart disease and diabetes. Excess sugar and refined carbohydrates, alcohol and overall calories can raise triglyceride levels.

High Fiber Choices

All plant foods - vegetables, fruits, nuts & seeds, legumes, tubers and whole grains have fiber. Usually, the closer the food is to its natural state, the higher the fiber. Following is a list of my all stars. Each serving below provides 5 or more grams of fiber.

- Legumes (black beans, pinto beans, garbanzos, lentils, etc.) are the highest source of dietary fiber. Fiber content varies per variety but on average 1/3 cup provides 5 grams or more.
- Berries are the highest fiber fruit, especially raspberries & blackberries. Score 5 grams with ¾ cup.
- Apples and pears provide 5 grams of fiber and contain a specific type of fiber called pectin that is soothing and healing to the GI tract.
- Flaxseed meal and oat bran are delicious sprinkled on top of salads, mixed into shakes and added into oatmeal (after cooking) Just 2 Tbsp add 5 grams of fiber.
- Raw nuts and seeds are all high in fiber. The highest fiber nut is the almond, 15 almonds provide 5 grams of fiber.

- All greens are a great source of fiber - 1 cup of cooked Brussels sprouts or broccoli or ½ cup of cooked spinach provide 5 grams of fiber.
- One cup of cooked steel cut oatmeal gives you 5 grams of fiber and research supports its cholesterol lowering effects.
- Bran cereals are loaded with fiber-just ¼ cup of most types provides 5 grams of fiber. Be sure to choose a brand that has no added sugar.
- One cup of any of the winter squashes provides 5 grams of fiber. One-half of a medium sized yam or sweet potato provides 5 grams of fiber and is rich in the powerhouse antioxidant beta carotene.

Let's do the math. Getting 50 grams is easier than you think!

- Breakfast: Protein Shake with 2 tbsp flaxseed meal + 1 cup of raspberries (Score 10 grams)
- Lunch: One cup of lentil soup and a mixed green salad topped with grilled chicken and olive oil vinaigrette (Score 15 grams)
- Apple and 10 almonds (Score 10 grams)
- Dinner: 2 cups of roasted vegetables, ½ of a yam and grilled wild salmon (Score 15 grams)