

“Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where this is no path and leave a trail.”

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

I love this quote for many reasons, but mostly because it reminds me of my dad. He taught me to be a leader, not a follower and I've worked really hard to follow that advice. Those teachings instilled in me that it's not easy to be a leader and that's why not everyone can be one. I tried to teach my son the same lesson. Being a leader is often a very difficult road, and one on which you must often stand alone. That's ok. It made me who I am and it gave me the courage and the strength to face whatever obstacles came my way. But I also love this quote because it's just really good advice. Sometimes the journey in front of you is unknown. Sometimes there is no path. In those cases, you must forge ahead and make a new path for yourself. Ultimately, that will make the way easier for someone else who wants to forge a new path, but isn't quite sure how to do it. As I approach a fork in the path of my own life, it's crystal clear that it's time for me to veer off the path that's known and instead, embark on a new adventure. I can't wait to see what the future holds and I can't wait to share my journey in the coming months. Happy almost Spring!

Yours in health,

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The Missing Nutrient That Could Transform Your Health



In the world of nutrition, certain nutrients such as protein, vitamins, antioxidants, and healthy fats get a lot of attention. However, one of the most powerful nutrients for protecting health is often overlooked. That nutrient is fiber. Health experts now warn that we're living through a *"fiber deficiency epidemic."* Research suggests that over 90% of adults don't consume enough fiber daily, which may be contributing to rising rates of digestive problems, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Fiber probably doesn't sound that exciting, but it truly plays a critical role in helping the body function properly. Surprisingly, increasing fiber consumption is one of the easiest and most effective dietary changes that can be made to improve overall health.

What Exactly Is Fiber?

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate, which the body can't fully digest and is found in plant foods. Unlike other carbohydrates that are broken down into sugar, fiber passes through the digestive system largely intact. Along the way, it performs many important functions that support health. There are two main types of fiber:

1. **Soluble fiber:** This one dissolves in water and forms a gel-like substance in the digestive tract. It can help lower cholesterol levels and stabilize blood sugar.
2. **Insoluble fiber:** This one doesn't dissolve in water and helps move food through the digestive system. This causes your body to have more regular bathroom visits and helps improve digestive health.

Both types of fiber are essential to your body and most plant foods contain a combination of the two. Fiber also feeds the beneficial bacteria in the gut, which influences and improves the immune system, metabolism, and even brain health.

The recommended daily fiber intake for adults is about 25–35 grams per day. Unfortunately, the average person doesn't get enough, consuming only about 10–15 grams daily. One of the major reasons for this deficiency is the modern diet, which is often comprised of large amounts of refined and ultra-processed foods. One of the many problems with these types of foods is that most of them have their natural fiber removed during manufacturing. How many of these non-nutritious items are you eating on a regular basis?

- White bread
- Sugary cereals
- Packaged snack foods
- Fast food/frozen meals
- Sweetened beverages

These items provide a lot of calories, but very little fiber. Keep in mind that over time, low fiber intake can contribute to a number of health issues.

Fiber helps protect your health, and increasing fiber intake supports the body in many ways. Here are just a few of them:

- **Lowers the Risk of Heart Disease:** Soluble fiber helps remove cholesterol from the bloodstream. Additionally, studies show that diets high in fiber may also lower the risk of heart disease.
- **Improves Blood Sugar Levels:** Fiber slows digestion and the absorption of sugar, helping prevent spikes in blood glucose levels. This can reduce the risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes.
- **Improves Digestive Health:** Fiber adds bulk to the stool and supports regular bathroom visits, reducing the risk of constipation and digestive discomfort. This could potentially help lower the risk of developing colon cancer.
- **Aids in Weight Management:** High-fiber foods tend to be more filling, which can naturally help control appetite and reduce overeating. This is especially true if you eat slowly and give your brain the 20 minutes it needs to tell your stomach that it's full.
- **Reduces Inflammation:** Fiber supports the beneficial gut bacteria that produce compounds to help reduce inflammation, which is associated with many chronic diseases. I've written many times about how lowering inflammation can improve your health. Turmeric is another great source for that.

It's pretty easy to add more fiber to your daily diet. Even small changes can make a big difference. In addition to protein, which I think is important for every meal, add some of the following to increase fiber intake:

- **Oatmeal.** It provides soluble fiber, but choose it wisely. I recently read an article that alerted people to high glyphosate levels in certain brands. Glyphosate has been shown to cause cancer and I am beyond furious it's still allowed in our food supply. Even some organic brands won't save you from this dangerous chemical. Some of the worst offenders were all things Quaker (oatmeal squares, old fashioned oats, simply granola oats, steel cut oats), Nature Valley and most generic store brands. One of the most highly recommended brands was Whole Food 365 Organic Old-Fashioned Rolled Oats. But please be sure to do your own research. I'd been buying Quaker Oats and just threw them away.
- **Chia seeds and flaxseeds.** These are super simple to add into foods by sprinkling them on top of a salad, adding them to a soup, or blending them into a healthy high-protein smoothie.
- **Fruits and vegetables.** These are naturally rich in fiber, with some of the higher-fiber choices are as follows: apples, pears, berries, broccoli, carrots and brussels sprouts. When possible, eat the edible skins (but please buy organic), since much of the fiber is found there.
- **Beans and Legumes.** These are among the most fiber-rich foods available. Some examples include black beans, lentils, chickpeas and kidney beans. Adding beans to soups, salads, or grain bowls can significantly increase daily fiber intake.
- **Whole Grains.** Replace refined grains with whole grains whenever possible. Some of my favorites include quinoa, farro and barley. Those of you who like rice could also include brown rice in this category, but ditch the white rice. Oats also fall into this category. Whole grains contain the natural fiber that is removed during the refining process.

If you're a snacker, be sure to snack smarter and choose things like nuts and seeds, air-popped popcorn (organic and non-GMO please) and raw vegetables with (homemade) hummus.

Once you start adding fiber to your diet, here's a really important tip: Increase your intake **gradually** over several weeks. A sudden jump in fiber consumption can cause temporary bloating or digestive discomfort, which will not be comfortable. It's also important to drink plenty of water, which you should be doing anyway. Fiber works best when it absorbs water, which helps move it smoothly through the digestive system.

As I close for the month, I want to reinforce the idea that while many health trends come and go, fiber will definitely remain as one of the most consistently supported and important nutrients your body wants and needs. Increasing fiber intake can help improve digestion, support heart health, stabilize blood sugar, promote healthy weight management, and nourish the beneficial bacteria in the gut. The best part is that this powerful health strategy doesn't require expensive supplements or complicated programs. It's as simple as eating more whole plant foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds and whole grains. Any or all of them can dramatically increase fiber intake. Small changes in daily food choices can make a meaningful difference. Over time, eating these foods will become second nature and these simple habits may help protect long-term health and ultimately support a stronger, more resilient body.

If you have any questions, please be sure to reach out. Have a wonderful month!