

 **MEDCITY FAMILY CLINIC**

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**Healthy Lifestyle**

**Fiber is found mainly in plant foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and members of the bean family called legumes. Fiber may be best known for its ability to prevent or relieve constipation. But foods with fiber can have other good effects as well. They can help you stay at a healthy weight and lower the risk of diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer.**

**Choosing tasty foods that provide fiber isn't hard. Find out how much dietary fiber you need, which foods have it, and how to add them to meals and snacks.**

**What is dietary fiber?**

**Dietary fiber is a nutrient known as a carbohydrate. Fiber includes the parts of plant foods that the body can't digest or absorb. This makes it different from nutrients such as fats, proteins, and other carbohydrates including starches and sugars. The body breaks down these nutrients and absorbs them. Instead, fiber passes somewhat intact through the stomach, small intestine and colon and out of the body.**

**There are two main types of fiber:**

**Soluble fiber. This type of fiber dissolves in water. It forms a gel-like material in the stomach that slows down digestion. It can help lower cholesterol and blood sugar. Soluble fiber is found in oats, peas, beans, apples, bananas, avocados, citrus fruits, carrots, barley and psyllium.**

**Insoluble fiber. This type of fiber doesn't dissolve in water. It supports the movement of material through the digestive system and adds bulk to stool. So it can be helpful for people who have constipation or don't regularly pass stool. Some good sources of insoluble fiber are whole-wheat flour, wheat bran, nuts, beans, and vegetables such as cauliflower, green beans and potatoes.**

**Most high-fiber plant foods contain both soluble and insoluble fiber. The amount of each type of fiber varies with the type of plant, such as whether it's a fruit, vegetable or whole grain. But you can get both types of fiber by eating a variety of fiber-rich foods.**

**How much fiber do you need?**

**The National Academy of Medicine gives the following daily fiber recommendations for adults:**

**21 grams for women older than age 50.**

**25 grams for women age 50 or younger.**

**30 grams for men older than age 50.**

**38 grams for men age 50 or younger.**

**Benefits of a high-fiber diet**

**A high-fiber diet may support good health in a number of ways.**

**High fiber and less chance of constipation**

**Dietary fiber increases the weight and size of stool and softens it. In general, bulky stool is easier to pass, and this lowers the chance of constipation. If you have loose, watery stools, fiber may help make them solid. That's because fiber absorbs water and adds bulk to stool.**

**Bowel health and fiber**

**A high-fiber diet may lower the risk of swollen veins in the anus and lower rectum called hemorrhoids. Eating plenty of fiber also may help lower the risk of a condition called diverticulitis that involves small, inflamed pouches in the colon wall. A high-fiber diet is linked with a lower risk of colorectal cancer as well. Some fiber also serves as food for "good" bacteria in the gut. It's known as fermented fiber. It may play a role in lowering the risk of diseases of the colon.**

**High fiber and lower cholesterol levels**

**Soluble fiber found in beans, oats, flaxseed and oat bran may keep the body from absorbing some of the cholesterol in other foods. As a result, that may lower low-density lipoprotein, also called "bad," cholesterol levels in the blood. High-fiber foods may have other effects on heart health, such as lowering blood pressure and lessening swelling in the body called inflammation.**

**Blood sugar levels and fiber**

**In people with diabetes, fiber may slow the absorption of sugar and help improve blood sugar levels. That's especially true of soluble fiber. A healthy diet that includes both soluble and insoluble fiber also may lower the risk of type 2 diabetes.**

**Healthy weight and fiber**

**High-fiber foods tend to be more filling than low-fiber foods. So you're likely to eat less and stay satisfied longer. High-fiber foods also tend to take longer to eat and to be less energy dense than low-fiber foods. That means they have fewer calories for the same volume of food.**

**High-fiber diet and lifespan**

**Getting more fiber is linked with a lower risk of dying of any health condition, including heart disease.**

**Your best fiber choices**

**Nutritious foods that can help you get more daily fiber include:**

**Whole-grains such as barley, bulgur, brown rice, and whole-wheat bread or pasta.**

**Fruits.**

**Vegetables.**

**Beans, peas and other legumes.**

**Nuts and seeds.**

**Refined or processed foods usually are lower in fiber. The grain-refining process removes the outer coat, called bran, from the grain. That lowers the amount of fiber and other nutrients in the grain.**

**Examples of refined grains include white bread, pasta and cereals that aren't made with whole grains. Also, removing the skin from fruit or the pulp from fruit juice lowers fiber. Enriched foods have some of the B vitamins and iron added back after processing, but not the fiber.**

**Fiber supplements and fortified foods**

**In general, whole foods are better for you than fiber supplements. Fiber supplements don't provide the variety of fiber, vitamins, minerals and other healthful nutrients that whole foods do.**

**Your healthcare professional may recommend a fiber supplement if diet changes don't add enough fiber to your diet or if you have certain health conditions. These include conditions that affect the intestines such as constipation, diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome. Check with your healthcare professional before taking fiber supplements. These supplements include psyllium (Metamucil, Konsyl, others), methylcellulose (Citrucel) and calcium polycarbophil (FiberCon).**

**Another way to get more fiber is to eat food products that have fiber added to them by foodmakers. Some added fiber comes from plant sources such as bran, husks or roots that have been processed. Other types of added fiber are made in a lab. Added fiber ingredients that you might see on food labels include chicory root, cellulose and pectin. Some people say they get gas after eating foods with added fiber.**

**Tips for fitting in more fiber**

**Need ideas for adding more fiber to your meals and snacks? Try these suggestions:**

**Jump-start your day. For breakfast, choose a breakfast cereal with 5 grams or more of fiber a serving. Opt for cereals with whole grain, bran or fiber in the name. Or add a few tablespoons of wheat bran that hasn't been processed to your favorite cereal. Top your cereal with sliced bananas, berries or other fruit.**

**Switch to whole grains. Each day, make sure that at least half of the grains you eat are whole grains. Choose breads with at least 2 grams of fiber per serving. On the label, whole wheat, whole-wheat flour or another whole grain should be first in the ingredient list. Try other whole grains, too, such as brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat, whole-wheat pasta and quinoa.**

**Bulk up baked goods. Substitute whole-grain flour for half or all of the white flour when baking. Try adding crushed bran cereal, wheat bran or uncooked oatmeal to muffins, cakes and cookies.**

**Learn to like legumes. Beans and members of the bean family such as peas and lentils are excellent sources of fiber. Add kidney beans to canned soup or a green salad. Or make nachos with black beans, lots of fresh veggies, whole-wheat tortilla chips and salsa.**

**Eat fruit and vegetables. They're rich in fiber as well as vitamins and minerals. Try to eat five or more servings daily. You can have fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables. If you eat canned fruits, choose those that are canned in 100% fruit juice instead of syrup. If you eat canned vegetables, make sure they're low in sodium.**

**Make snacks count. Whole fruits, raw vegetables, low-fat popcorn without salt and whole-grain crackers are all healthy choices. A handful of nuts or dried fruits that don't have added sugar also can be a healthy, high-fiber snack. Just be aware that crackers, nuts and dried fruits are high in calories.**

**High-fiber foods are good for your health. But adding too much fiber too quickly can lead to gas, bloating and cramping. Add fiber to your diet slowly over a few weeks. This lets natural bacteria in your digestive system adjust to the change.**

**Also, drink plenty of water. Fiber works best when it absorbs water. This makes your stool soft, bulky and easier to pass.**

**When to not eat a high-fiber diet**

**In some situations, your healthcare professional may ask you to eat less fiber. This may ease the symptoms of a condition or help the digestive tract heal from a treatment.**

**After certain surgeries**

**If you get surgery that involves the intestines or stomach, your healthcare professional may recommend a lower fiber diet afterward for a time. This lets your digestive system heal.**

**When symptoms of some conditions flare up**

**Conditions such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis inflame parts of the digestive tract. When symptoms flare up, you may need to eat less fiber. Your healthcare professional also may ask you to eat less fiber during a bout of diverticulitis. But once the symptoms of these conditions get better, it's often important to slowly add fiber back into your diet. Talk with your healthcare professional first.**

**After developing narrowed intestines**

**Conditions such as Crohn's disease can cause parts of the intestines to become narrowed over time. These narrowed areas are called strictures. If you have strictures, you may need to follow a low-fiber diet. This keeps the intestines from becoming blocked.**

**During radiation therapy**

**This cancer treatment can cause diarrhea and narrowing of the intestines as side effects. That's especially true if the radiation is targeted at the stomach area or the pelvic area. Eating less fiber may ease symptoms.**

**Living with gastroparesis**

**With this condition, the stomach empties slowly after eating. High-fiber foods may make gastroparesis symptoms worse.**

**Preparing for a colonoscopy**

**A colonoscopy is an exam used to look for changes in the large intestine and rectum. Before the exam, you'll likely need to follow a low-fiber diet for several days. This helps clean the large intestine while you prepare for your colonoscopy. In turn, this helps your healthcare professional see inside your large intestine more clearly during the colonoscopy.**

**Make a plan with your healthcare team**

**Check with a healthcare professional, nurse or dietitian before you make big changes to your diet. This is especially important if you have health conditions or specific symptoms. Healthcare professionals can provide advice tailored to your needs. They also can ensure that any diet changes are safe and right for your situation.**

**Estilo de vida saludable**

**Nutrición y comida saludable**

**Come más fibra. Probablemente ya lo hayas oído antes. ¿Pero sabes por qué la fibra es tan buena para tu salud?**

**La fibra dietética, que se encuentra principalmente en frutas, verduras, granos enteros y legumbres, es probablemente más conocida por su capacidad de prevenir o aliviar el estreñimiento. Pero los alimentos que contienen fibra también pueden brindar otros beneficios para la salud, como ayudar a mantener un peso saludable y reducir el riesgo de sufrir diabetes, enfermedades cardíacas y algunos tipos de cáncer.**

**Seleccionar alimentos sabrosos que proporcionen fibra no es difícil. Averigua cuánta fibra dietética necesitas, los alimentos que la contienen y cómo agregarla a las comidas y los refrigerios.**

**La fibra dietética, también conocida como fibra alimentaria o alimenticia, incluye las partes de los alimentos vegetales que el cuerpo no puede digerir o absorber. A diferencia de otros componentes de los alimentos, como las grasas, las proteínas o los carbohidratos, que el cuerpo descompone y absorbe, la fibra no es digerida por el cuerpo. En cambio, pasa relativamente intacta a través del estómago, el intestino delgado y el colon, y sale del cuerpo.**

**La fibra se clasifica comúnmente como soluble, que se disuelve en agua, o insoluble, que no se disuelve.**

**Fibra soluble. Este tipo de fibra se disuelve en agua para formar un material gelatinoso. Puede ayudar a reducir los niveles de colesterol y glucosa en la sangre. La fibra soluble se encuentra en la avena, los guisantes, los frijoles, las manzanas, los cítricos, las zanahorias, la cebada y el psilio.**

**Fibra insoluble. Este tipo de fibra promueve el movimiento del material a través del aparato digestivo y aumenta el volumen de las heces, por lo que puede ser de beneficio para aquellos que luchan contra el estreñimiento o la evacuación irregular. La harina de trigo integral, el salvado de trigo, los frutos secos, los frijoles y las verduras, como la coliflor, los frijoles verdes y las papas, son buenas fuentes de fibra insoluble.**

**La cantidad de fibra soluble e insoluble varía en los diferentes alimentos vegetales. Para recibir el mayor beneficio para la salud, come una amplia variedad de alimentos ricos en fibra.**

**Una dieta alta en fibra:**

**Normaliza las deposiciones. La fibra dietética aumenta el peso y el tamaño de las heces y las ablanda. Una materia fecal voluminosa es más fácil de evacuar, lo que disminuye la probabilidad de estreñimiento. Si tus heces son sueltas y acuosas, la fibra puede ayudar a solidificar las heces, porque absorbe agua y agrega volumen a las heces.**

**Ayuda a mantener la salud intestinal. Una dieta alta en fibra puede reducir el riesgo de desarrollar hemorroides y bolsas pequeñas en el colon (enfermedad diverticular). Los estudios también han encontrado que una dieta alta en fibra probablemente disminuye el riesgo de desarrollar cáncer colorrectal. Parte de la fibra se fermenta en el colon. Los investigadores están observando qué función puede tener esto en la prevención de enfermedades del colon.**

**Reduce los niveles de colesterol. La fibra soluble que se encuentra en los frijoles, la avena, la linaza y el salvado de avena puede ayudar a reducir los niveles de colesterol total en la sangre, pues disminuye los niveles de lipoproteína de baja densidad, o colesterol "malo". Los estudios también han demostrado que los alimentos ricos en fibra pueden tener otros beneficios para la salud del corazón, como la reducción de la presión arterial y la inflamación.**

**Ayuda a controlar los niveles de azúcar en la sangre. En las personas con diabetes, la fibra, particularmente la fibra soluble, puede retardar la absorción del azúcar y ayudar a mejorar los niveles de azúcar en la sangre. Una dieta saludable que incluya fibra insoluble también puede reducir el riesgo de desarrollar diabetes tipo 2.**

**Ayuda a lograr un peso saludable. Los alimentos con alto contenido de fibra tienden a llenar más que los alimentos con bajo contenido de fibra, por lo que es probable que comas menos y te mantengas satisfecho por más tiempo. Y los alimentos ricos en fibra tienden a tardar más en comerse y a ser menos "densos en energía", lo que significa que tienen menos calorías para el mismo volumen de alimentos.**

**Te ayuda a vivir más tiempo. Los estudios sugieren que el aumento de la ingesta de fibra dietética, especialmente de fibra de cereales, está asociado con un menor riesgo de morir de enfermedades cardiovasculares y de todos los tipos de cáncer.**

**El Institute of Medicine (Instituto de Medicina), que proporciona asesoramiento científico en temas relacionados con la medicina y la salud, hace las siguientes recomendaciones de consumo diario de fibras para los adultos:**

**50 años de edad o menos Mayores de 51 años**

**Instituto de Medicina**

**Hombres 38 gramos 30 gramos**

**Mujeres 25 gramos 21 gramos**

**Si no estás consumiendo suficiente fibra todos los días, es posible que necesites aumentar el consumo. Algunas buenas opciones incluyen:**

**Productos integrales**

**Frutas**

**Verduras**

**Frijoles, guisantes y otras legumbres**

**Frutos secos y semillas**

**Los alimentos refinados o procesados, como las frutas y verduras enlatadas, los jugos sin pulpa, los panes y pastas blancos y los cereales de granos no enteros, son más bajos en fibra. El proceso de refinación del grano elimina la capa exterior (salvado) del grano, lo que reduce su contenido de fibra. A los alimentos enriquecidos se les vuelven a añadir algunas de las vitaminas del complejo B y el hierro después del procesamiento, pero no la fibra.**

**Por lo general, los alimentos integrales son mejores que los suplementos de fibra. Los suplementos de fibra, como Metamucil, Citrucel y FiberCon, no proporcionan la variedad de fibras, vitaminas, minerales y otros nutrientes beneficiosos que ofrecen los alimentos.**

**Otra manera de obtener más fibra es comer alimentos, como cereales, barras de granola, yogur y helado, con fibra agregada. La fibra agregada suele etiquetarse como "inulina" o "raíz de achicoria". Algunas personas se quejan de tener gases después de comer alimentos con fibra agregada.**

**Sin embargo, algunas personas pueden necesitar un suplemento de fibra si los cambios en la dieta no son suficientes o si tienen ciertas afecciones como estreñimiento, diarrea o síndrome del intestino irritable. Consulta con tu médico antes de tomar suplementos de fibra.**

**¿Necesitas ideas para incorporar más fibra en tus comidas y bocadillos? Prueba estas sugerencias:**

**Empieza tu día con mucha energía. Para el desayuno, elige un cereal con alto contenido de fibra, 5 gramos o más de fibra por porción. Opta por cereales que digan "integral", "salvado" o "fibra" en el nombre. O bien, agrega unas cucharadas de salvado de trigo sin procesar a tu cereal favorito.**

**Incorpora granos integrales. Consume al menos la mitad de todos los granos en su forma integral. Busca los panes que digan en la etiqueta "integral", de harina de trigo u otro grano integral, como primer ingrediente y come por lo menos 2 gramos de fibra alimenticia por porción. Experimenta con arroz integral, arroz silvestre, cebada, pasta integral y trigo burgol.**

**Aumenta la cantidad de productos horneados. Sustituye la mitad o la totalidad de la harina blanca por harina integral al hornear. Intenta agregar cereal de salvado triturado, salvado de trigo sin procesar o avena cruda a los panecillos, pasteles y galletas.**

**Amígate con las legumbres. Los frijoles, los guisantes y las lentejas son excelentes fuentes de fibra. Agrega frijoles a la sopa enlatada o a una ensalada verde. O haz nachos con frijoles negros refritos, muchos vegetales frescos, chips de tortilla de trigo integral y salsa.**

**Come más frutas y verduras. Las frutas y verduras son ricas en fibra, así como en vitaminas y minerales. Trata de comer cinco o más porciones diarias.**

**Haz que los bocadillos cuenten. Las frutas frescas, las verduras crudas, las palomitas de maíz bajas en grasa y las galletas integrales son buenas opciones. Un puñado de nueces o frutas secas también es un bocadillo saludable y rico en fibra, aunque debes tener en cuenta que las nueces y frutas secas tienen un alto contenido calórico.**

**Los alimentos ricos en fibra son buenos para la salud. Pero agregar demasiada fibra demasiado rápido puede producir gases intestinales, hinchazón abdominal y calambres. Aumenta la fibra en la dieta gradualmente durante algunas semanas. Esto permite que las bacterias naturales de tu sistema digestivo se adapten al cambio.**

**Además, bebe mucha agua. La fibra funciona mejor cuando absorbe agua, con lo que las heces serán blandas y voluminosas.**