

Daily Life with Diabetes

Delicious Ways to Increase Fiber Intake

It might be Easier Than You Think!

Fiber is one of the easiest nutrients to incorporate into your diet, and one of the most important. However, not many Americans get the 25 to 30 grams of fiber recommended daily for a healthy diet. Low fiber intake can raise your risk for many health problems, including constipation, high cholesterol, weight gain, irritable bowel syndrome, and even cancer of the colon. Fiber can also help you maintain a healthy blood sugar level.

What is Fiber?

Fiber is the fibrous part of a plant food that your body cannot digest. When fiber passes through the digestive tract, it acts like a broom, sweeping out all unnecessary waste. Fiber can be found naturally in many foods, and in supplement form. Here are some tasty ideas to add fiber to your daily diet:

Leave the sugary cereals on the shelves.

Whole grain cereals and bran flakes are usually jam-packed with fiber—about 5 grams in one $\frac{3}{4}$ cup serving! If you're having a hard time swallowing these healthier varieties, try adding a little sweetness with fresh fruit, vanilla soy milk, or a sugar-free sweetener.



Pass the beans, please.

Beans and legumes are always a healthy choice, usually containing 6-7 grams of fiber per $\frac{1}{2}$ cup serving (cooked). Plus, you can easily add them to just about any meal. Heated as a side, in soups or chili, added to salads, or in place of meat in a main dish, beans have a healthy combination of fiber, protein, and healthy fat that keeps you feeling fuller longer.

Sweeten with fruit; add volume with vegetables.

Fruits and vegetables should be must-eat staples of everyone's diet. These tasty wonders are high in volume, low in calories, and high in fiber. Be sure to follow the serving size recommendations to avoid blood sugar spikes. One cup of fresh red raspberries holds a whopping 8 grams of fiber and blackberries are close behind at about 7.5 grams. Pears, prunes, and apples all measure up at about 4 grams of fiber per serving.

Vegetables are a little lower on the totem pole for fiber, but still a great source. Get 2 grams of fiber in a serving of broccoli, asparagus, cabbage, carrots, green beans, spinach, lettuce, or tomatoes.



More Fiber-Rich Tips

Choose fresh fruit and/or vegetables over juice.

To get more fiber and nutrients, eat the skin of cleaned fruits and vegetables.

Include bran and whole grain breads daily.

Drink more water to accommodate your increased fiber intake to reduce indigestion.

Eat less processed foods and more whole foods.

Try to meet your fiber requirements with foods rather than supplements.

A large increase in fiber over a short period of time could result in bloating, diarrhea, gas, and all-around discomfort. It is better to add fiber to your diet gradually over a recommended period of about three weeks, to avoid abdominal problems.