

# Dietary Fibre

Essential for digestive health and overall wellbeing

## FACT SHEET

It's hailed a digestive health star, yet most people don't know that dietary fibre also takes centre stage for its ability to reduce the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, bowel cancer and weight gain.

### What is dietary fibre?



Found only in plant foods (e.g. grain foods, legumes, vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds), dietary fibre escapes digestion and absorption in the small intestine. Dietary fibre then makes its way into the large intestine (colon), where it is partially or completely broken down by good bacteria which help to promote health and wellbeing.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Reasons to enjoy a high fibre diet

- ✓ Lower risk of heart disease<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ Manage and reduce risk of type 2 diabetes<sup>3,7</sup>
- ✓ Protect against colorectal cancer<sup>8,9</sup>
- ✓ Reduced risk of early death<sup>10</sup>
- ✓ Reduced inflammation<sup>3,11</sup>
- ✓ Improved weight control<sup>12-14</sup>
- ✓ Improved digestive health and lower risk of digestive disorders<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ Enhanced immune function<sup>3</sup>

There are several types of dietary fibre which act in different ways to improve digestive health and protect against disease:

	Soluble fibre	Insoluble fibre	Resistant starch
How this fibre works	Think 'gel-like' fibre. Soluble fibres attract water to form a thick gel which slows digestion and results in lower blood glucose levels after eating. Soluble fibre also looks after your heart by helping to lower 'artery clogging' LDL-cholesterol. <sup>3</sup>	Think 'bulking' fibre. These fibres promote healthy, regular bowel movements. <sup>3</sup>	Resistant starch helps the good bugs in your colon thrive, promoting digestive health which may also be linked to reduced disease risk. <sup>4</sup>
What foods to eat	Whole grains (especially oats, barley, rye and grain foods made with these ingredients like breads, breakfast cereals, crispbreads) legumes (lentils, red kidney beans, chickpeas, baked beans), psyllium, some fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds.	Most whole grains (whole wheat, brown rice, rye, barley), wheat bran, rice bran, bran based grain foods (breakfast cereals), whole grain and wholemeal breads, pastas, crispbreads, noodles and couscous as well as legumes, nuts and the skins of vegetables and fruits.	Legumes, whole grains like brown rice, whole grain foods, breads, pasta, noodles, rice, breakfast cereal and crispbreads as well as cold cooked potatoes and firm bananas.
			

### Did you know?

Grain foods provide more dietary fibre in the Australian diet than any other foods.<sup>5</sup>



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## How much fibre do you need?

The total amount of dietary fibre we need to eat each day varies according to age, gender, life stage and disease risk. This table provides a summary of the minimum levels required by adults for digestive health as well as the target to reduce risk of disease.<sup>15</sup>

Adults	Fibre per day
<i>Minimum requirement for digestive health</i>	
Women	25g
Men	30g
<i>For disease prevention</i>	
Women	28g
Men	38g

## Putting it all together into a balanced high fibre diet

Maximise the health benefits of fibre by enjoying grain foods 3-4 times each day, choosing at least half as whole grain or high fibre grain foods. Also aim to eat legumes at least 2-3 times each week.

Drinking plenty of fluids, preferably water and being physically active are also very important when following a high fibre diet to help keep you feeling your best.

	High fibre meal plan	Approximate fibre content (grams per serve) <sup>16</sup>	
<b>BREAKFAST</b>	1 bowl of high fibre cereal (¾ cup or 30g) with milk	5.7	Try baked beans (preferably no added salt) with whole grain bread as a fibre rich alternative
	With 1 cup strawberries sliced and a dollop of yoghurt	3.8	
<b>MORNING TEA</b>	2-3 tablespoons of low fat hummus dip or mung bean dip*	4	Or you could have 3 whole grain crispbreads
	With celery and carrot vegetable sticks	2	
<b>LUNCH</b>	A roast beef sandwich using 2 slices of dense whole grain bread	5.7	Choose whole grain (wholemeal or multi-grain) or high fibre breads
	With lettuce, avocado, tomato and cucumber	2	
	30g unsalted nuts	2.7	
<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>	Fruit smoothie using a banana and milk	3.6	Rolled oats or oatmeal can also be used as a fibre boost in smoothies as well as soups or casseroles
	With ¼ cup of rolled oats	2.8	
<b>DINNER</b>	Moroccan chickpea and basmati rice pilaf* (recipe image above)	13	Legumes (i.e. beans, peas, lentils and chickpeas) are a fibre rich source of protein, which can be added to your favourite meals including salads, soups, casseroles or simply mixing in with your rice
<b>TOTAL FIBRE INTAKE PER DAY (g)</b>		45.3	

### Time Saver Tip

Keep a low fat dip made from legumes handy or prepare it yourself for a convenient snack

### Healthy Tip

Aim for at least 3 different types of vegetables in your sandwiches

\*Check out some quick and easy recipes like Classic Hummus or Moroccan chickpea and Basmati Rice Pilaf at [www.glnc.org.au](http://www.glnc.org.au)

Download GLNC's *Everyday Guide to Cooking with Legumes* for fibre boosting recipes.



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