



33 Miller Avenue • Mill Valley, California 94941 • Phone: 415-380-9242 • Fax: 415-388-7458
351 San Andreas Drive • Novato, California 94945 • Phone: 415-878-4986 • Fax: 415-897-4771

Introduction to Fiber

Fiber Overview

Dietary fiber is the part of plants that can't be digested. There are 2 kinds of dietary fiber: insoluble and soluble. Insoluble fiber adds bulk to keep foods moving through the digestive system. Soluble fiber holds water, which softens the stool for easy bowel movements. Fiber is an important part of your diet, even though it passes through your body undigested and has no nutritional value. A high fiber diet can:

- promote regular bowel movements
- treat diverticular disease (inflammation of part of the intestine) and irritable bowel syndrome (abdominal pain, diarrhea, and constipation that come and go)
- promote improvement in hemorrhoids, constipation and fecal incontinence

You should have at least 14 grams of fiber for every 1000 calories you eat every day. Read the label on every food package to find out how much fiber a serving of the food will provide. Foods containing more than 20% of the daily value of fiber per serving are considered high in fiber.

Without enough fiber in your diet, you may suffer from:

- constipation
- small, hard, dry bowel movements.

Sources of Fiber

Breads, cereals, and pasta made with whole grain flour, and brown rice are high fiber foods. Many breakfast cereals list the bran or fiber content, so it's easy to know which products are high in fiber.

All fruits and vegetables also contain fiber. Dried beans, leafy vegetables, peas, raisins, prunes, apples, and citrus fruits are all especially good sources of fiber. Ask for examples of high-fiber foods (the fiber table and types of fiber handouts) for more resources on fiber.