Fiber is Your Friend

Why eat Fiber?
Fiber provides health benefits through prevention and management of some diseases.

- Reduces constipation. Fiber softens and increases the bulk of bowels, easing bowel movements.
- Reduces the risk of diverticulitis by reducing constipation.
- It can lower cholesterol when combined with a low fat diet.
- Helps with weight management by increasing the feeling of fullness.
- Helps with diabetes by slowing the absorption of sugar.
- Reduces the risk of colon cancer by diluting potential cancer causing agents.

What Is Fiber?
Fiber is the indigestible part of plants in two general categories:

1) Soluble Fiber
- Dissolves in water to form a gel and binds with fats and cholesterol so they are not absorbed by the body. It also slows the absorption of sugar.
- Is fermented by bacteria in the colon, producing beneficial by-products.
- Is in oat bran and the softer parts of fruits, vegetables and beans.

2) Insoluble Fiber
- Increases bulk and softness of the bowel, easing bowel movements.
- Is in the structural parts of plants like the stalks and skin of fruits, vegetables and wheat bran.

How much Fiber?
25 grams a day for women and 35 grams a day for men.

- Increase fiber consumption slowly (1-3 grams per week) to avoid discomfort from gas.
- Drink a lot more water or the fiber can worsen constipation.
- Eat lots of different grains, beans, fruits and vegetables to get the most benefit.

Look for whole grain breads with 3+ grams of fiber per serving and cereals with 5+ grams of fiber per serving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Grains 1/4 cup dry</th>
<th>Fiber grams*</th>
<th>Beans ½ cup cooked</th>
<th>Fiber grams*</th>
<th>Fruits &amp; Vegetables 1 med. sized fruit, ½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw vegetables</th>
<th>Fiber grams**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown Rice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Great Northern beans</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Acorn squash</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Black beans</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgar</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lentils</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Green peas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinoa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pinto beans</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolled Oats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Red Kidney beans</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel cut oats</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Split peas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pear</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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References