

# Ask Dr. Tastebud



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**Dear Dr. Tastebud,**  
***My friends have been telling me that most Americans don't consume enough fiber...Is this true? If so, what kinds of food should I be eating? And honestly, why should I even care?***  
***~Lacking Fiber Fretter***

Dear Lacking,

I am so glad you asked! It is sad, but true that such an important nutrient is being underrepresented in the diet of many Americans. In fact, the majority of us consume less than 50 percent of the recommended intake as spelled out by the Institute of Medicine (IOM).

## ***What is fiber?***

Fiber is a substance found in plants. Dietary fiber is found in fruits, lentils, whole grains, and vegetables. This substance, when eaten does not get absorbed, but rather passes through the digestive tract, possibly taking cholesterol with it and also working to stabilize blood sugars. Therefore, even though it doesn't get digested, it is a great asset in our diet.

## ***What is the difference between soluble and insoluble fiber?***

There are two types of dietary fiber: soluble and insoluble. Both are important and necessary in a diet, however, most of the health benefits come from soluble fiber.

A plum is a great example of the two types of fiber...Think of it this way...The outer skin of the plum is the roughage that provides the insoluble fiber, or bulk, to your diet. The inside pulpy flesh of the fruit is where the soluble fiber is found.

## **Soluble fiber:**

- Prolongs the time that food leaves the stomach creating an extended feeling of fullness and more stable blood sugars.
- Lowers total as well as LDL (bad) cholesterol
- Regulates blood sugars

## **Insoluble fiber:**

- Moves bulk through the GI tract promoting regular bowel function
- Helps to keep an optimal pH in intestines so as to inhibit the growth of bad microorganisms

## ***How much fiber do I need?***

The IOM set Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI). These are recommended intakes for individuals. This information can be found at the USDA website for future reference. As a general rule: 25 g/day for women and 38 g/day for men. This amount of fiber can easily be met if you consume at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables daily as well as at least 6 servings of whole grains.

**Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) for Fiber**

Age	g/day of Fiber
<b>Children</b>	
1-8	19-25
<b>Males</b>	
9-13	31
14-50	38
51+	30
<b>Females</b>	
9-18	26
19-50	25
51+	21
<b>Pregnancy</b>	28
<b>Lactation</b>	29

## ***Dietary Sources***

### Vegetables

green beans  
carrots  
dark, leafy greens  
artichoke  
root vegetables  
sweet potatoes  
potatoes

### Fruit (eat the skin for insoluble fiber)

apples  
raspberries

### Whole wheat products

### Seeds and nuts

### Beans and peas

### Wheat bran

### Oat bran

### Oatmeal

## ***What are the benefits?***

By increasing fiber intake to the recommended level, it is quite possible that you can lower your risk of diabetes, heart disease, diverticulitis (unnatural, inflamed, and painful pouches on the outside of the large intestine), and constipation. An adequate soluble fiber intake will help lower cholesterol and stabilize blood sugars. One will increase the satiety level (feeling of fullness) after a meal which means that in theory, less food will be consumed. Thus, eating fiber is a great way to manage weight, and maybe even help to shed those last five pounds. That is why you should care!

## ***How can I increase my intake?***

Some helpful hints:

- Make sure when you buy bread that the first ingredient listed is whole wheat flour
- Eat vegetarian! Many vegetarian meals are based around the previously mentioned foods
- Eat the skin and edible seeds of fruits
- Mix bran into recipes
- Use nuts and seeds as a garnish for salad

## **Full of Fiber Feast**

### -Black Bean Pita Pockets-

1 ½ lb. canned black beans, rinsed and drained  
2 tbsp. chopped pimento  
2 tbsp. parsley  
1 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. olive oil  
2 tbsp. lemon juice  
1 ½ tablespoon water  
¼ tsp. dry mustard  
1 clove garlic, minced  
4 pita pocket breads, warm and cut in half

### Directions:

- Combine beans, pimento and parsley in a bowl.
- Combine remaining ingredients, except pitas, in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Add salt and pepper to taste. Shake vigorously. Pour dressing over beans. Set aside 30 minutes.
- Divide equally and stuff into pita breads.

Recipe makes 4 servings.

**Just remember...A high fiber apple a day should keep this doctor away!**

### ***References:***

*Position of the American Dietetic Association: Health Implications of Dietary Fiber, J. Am. Diet. Assoc. 1716 – 1731, 2008.*

*Grabitske, HA, Slavin, JL, Low Digestible Carbohydrates in Practice J Am Diet Assoc S0002 – 8223, 2008.*

Do you have a question for Dr. Tastebud? Send it to [chaar@bgsu.edu](mailto:chaar@bgsu.edu)

