



Fiber and Gut Health

Fiber is a necessary component for normalizing bowel movements, lowering cholesterol levels, controlling blood sugar and maintaining a healthy gut. Fiber feeds the good bacteria living within the gut, keeping it healthy and in balance to avoid a toxic environment caused by harmful bacteria. There are many bacterial species, also known as the gut microbiome, that reside in the gastrointestinal tract. This microbiome relies on fiber and a healthy diet to maintain overall well-being. A study published in *Nutrients* (2019) found the gut microbiome plays an important role in health, influencing the development of chronic diseases ranging from metabolic disease to gastrointestinal disorders and colorectal cancer.

There are different types of fiber, including soluble fiber, which blends with water in the gut, reducing blood sugar spikes and has various metabolic health benefits. Soluble fiber can be found in oats, peas, beans, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, barley and psyllium. Insoluble fiber doesn't dissolve in water; it stays mostly intact as it passes through the digestive system functioning as a "bulking" agent and may help speed the passage of food and waste through the gut. Insoluble fiber can be found in whole-wheat flour, wheat bran, nuts, beans and vegetables, such as cauliflower, green beans and potatoes. Fermented fiber is digestible and used as fuel by the gut bacteria increasing the number and balance of friendly bacteria in the gut, leading to various health benefits.

Eating a healthy diet high in fiber while reducing the amount of processed, high sugar and high fat foods may lead to better gut health and contributing to a strong immune system, a healthy heart and brain, improved mood, quality sleep and effective digestion. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, women should consume 25 grams of fiber a day; men, 38 grams. For adults over the age of 50, women should aim for 21 grams while men should target 30 grams per day. Here's a food plan that'll give you 37 grams of fiber in a single day.

Breakfast 6.5 grams of fiber:

One serving of whole-grain bran flake cereal and skim milk - *5 grams of fiber*

Half a banana - *1.5 grams of fiber*

Morning snack 5.3 grams of fiber:

24 almonds - *3.3 grams of fiber*

A quarter cup of raisins - *2 grams of fiber*

Lunch 8.1 grams of fiber:

Turkey sandwich, 2 slices of whole wheat bread, lettuce, and tomato - *about 5 grams of fiber*

Orange - *3.1 grams of fiber*

Afternoon snack:

Yogurt topped with half a cup of blueberries - *2 grams of fiber*

Dinner 12.2 grams of fiber:

Grilled fish, a salad with romaine lettuce and shredded carrots - *2.6 grams of fiber*

Half a cup of cooked spinach - *2.1 grams of fiber*

Half a cup of lentils - *7.5 grams of fiber*

After-dinner snack:

3 cups popped popcorn - *3.5 grams of fiber*