



EL SURGEONS

SPECIALIST SURGEONS

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High Fibre Dietary Guidelines

What is fibre?

Fibre is a type of carbohydrate that is difficult for the body to breakdown and digest. Most is excreted as waste, but some is fermented in the large intestine.

Types of fibre

1. Soluble fibre

Soluble refers to a substance that dissolves in water and forms into a gel. If you've ever mixed chia seeds with liquid, you may have seen this process in action. It is commonly found in foods such as oats, barley and legumes.

2. Insoluble fibre

Insoluble fibre does not mix in water or form a gel. It's found in many whole grains, fruits and vegetables, but is not as easily fermented as soluble fibre. Insoluble fibre gives stool bulk and allows regular bowel movements.

Benefits of a high fibre diet

Diets high in fibre are associated with lower risk of colorectal cancers, lower cholesterol, maintenance of heart health and blood sugar level regulation.

When muscles of the GI tract lose strength due to a lack of fibre, they can bulge out into pockets causing diverticular disease. Increased fibre consumption may help prevent inflammation of these pockets, a condition called diverticulitis.

Intestinal Bowel Diseases, such as Chron's disease and Ulcerative colitis, as well as advanced IBS may need a fibre modified diet and should be discussed with your doctor and dietitian.

Below is the recommended amount of fibre needed per day for various individuals:

Adult Males	Adult Females
19-50 years: 38g years: 30g	19-50 years: 25g years: 21 g pregnancy: 28g lactation: 29g

High fibre dietary suggestions

1. Add high-fibre foods gradually
2. Choose from a variety of fibre-rich foods, so that you get both soluble and insoluble fibre
3. Aim towards eating at least 2 cups of vegetables per day
4. Increase fruit intake to at least 2 servings per day (one serving is one fruit or a small handful of chopped fruit)
5. Drink water together with your high fibre meals. Aim for 6 glasses of water per day, unless fluid is restricted by your healthcare practitioner.
6. Practical suggestions for increasing vegetable and fruit consumption
 - Make a fruit salad
 - Double your normal serving sizes of vegetables
 - Eat raw fruit and vegetables as snacks
 - Use fruit in your cereal (bananas, apples, grapes, berries, etc.)
 - Eat a vegetarian dinner at least once a week
 - Enjoy raw vegetable platters at parties
 - Add vegetables to your favourite pasta or rice dishes
 - Enjoy vegetable sides with your braai
7. When eating carbohydrates choose unrefined starches. These contain more vitamins, minerals and fibre compared to refined carbohydrates. Refined carbohydrates should be minimized or left out of the diet due to their poor nutritional value and lack of fibre. When reading food labels of carbohydrates, a high fibre product is one that has more than 6g of fibre per 100g.

Unrefined carbohydrates	Refined carbohydrates
Whole wheat bread	White/brown bread
Whole wheat pasta	White pasta
Rye products	White rice
Bulgur wheat	White flour
Whole wheat couscous	Sugar
Oatmeal/Oats	Cakes
Bran cereals	Biscuits
Quinoa	Pastries
Brown rice	Doughnuts
Corn	Vetkoek
Boiled potatoes with the skin,	
Sweet potatoes	
Legumes (Lentils, dried beans, peas & soya)	
Whole wheat crackers	
Popcorn	

Naturally occurring fibre from whole foods is the best way to incorporate fibre into the diet.

If you are unable to add enough through your diet, you may consider a fibre supplement.

Alternatively, you can try adding bran, psyllium, and/or flaxseed powder to your meals (i.e. yoghurt, porridge, thick soups and smoothies).