



Fibre



Health



Wellness



Nutrition



Support

Introduction

Dietary fibre is a type of carbohydrate found naturally in plants. Fibre is essential for the digestive system to function normally. It increases levels of good bacteria, which helps prevent disease and allergies. Despite the benefits to health being well known, we generally do not eat enough fibre in our diets.

Contents

Introduction	2
What is fibre?	3
Why do we need fibre?	3
How can we include more fibre in our diets?	3
Increasing fibre in our diet	4
The key to gut health: Plant diversity!	4
What counts?	5
Final thought	5



What is fibre?

Fibre is a type of carbohydrate found in plants. Plant foods that have not be processed in any way will be higher in fibre. Foods that are higher in fibre include:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Wholegrains
- Nuts
- Seeds

Why do we need fibre?

Fibre has been proven through research to improve our health. Higher fibre diets are linked to better weight control and reduced risk of conditions such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and bowel cancer.

Foods that are higher in fibre can help us feel fuller for longer, reducing the amount of food and total calories we eat in a day. Fibre is found in natural foods that have minimal or no processing and are higher in vitamins and minerals our body needs.

Dietary fibre can also reduce the risk of:

- **Constipation:** Fibre allows our digestive system to work smoothly, meaning that stools move more quickly through the gut and are easier to pass.
- **Cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes:** Foods such as oats and barley contain a type of fibre known as beta-glucan, which can help to reduce cholesterol levels. Beta-glucan has also been found to help control blood sugar levels as it can reduce the rise in glucose after a meal.
- **Bowel cancer:** Fibre helps food move quickly through the gut and has a role in helping manage our weight, therefore reducing the risk of bowel cancer.
- **Gut health:** There are trillions of bacteria in our gut and around 1,000 species of gut bacteria unique for every individual - changing throughout our lives. Fibre can increase the good bacteria in the gut which supports good health, mental health, lower risk of disease and weight control.

How can we include more fibre in our diets?

Most people do not eat enough fibre, but choosing a variety of high fibre foods is important for our health. These include:

- wholegrains (cereals, pasta, bread, rice, oats, barley and rye)
- beans and pulses
- nuts and seeds
- potatoes with skin
- fruits and vegetables including the skin



We should try to eat around 30g of fibre every day. Some examples of common high fibre foods we can include in our diet are:

Two Weetabix	3g of fibre
Apple	4g of fibre
Half a cup of oats	9g of fibre
Thick slice of brown bread	2g of fibre
Potato with skin	2g of fibre
Cup of cooked lentils	4g of fibre
Two carrots	6g of fibre

Increasing fibre in our diet

Here are some tips to try and increase fibre in your diet....

Add...

- ✓ Fresh fruit, dried fruit, nuts or seeds to wholegrain breakfast cereals, porridge or yoghurt.
- ✓ Extra vegetables, lentils, beans or chickpeas into sauces, stews, soups and curries.
- ✓ Chunky peanut butter to apple slices or celery sticks.

Swap...

- ✓ White bread for wholemeal or seeded wholegrain breads.
- ✓ White pasta and rice for wholegrains such as wholewheat pasta, bulgur wheat and brown rice.
- ✓ White crackers for vegetable sticks, rye crackers or oatcakes to have with hummous.

Try to...

- ✓ Keep a supply of frozen vegetables so you are never without.
- ✓ Go for potatoes with skin like baked potatoes, boiled new potatoes or potato wedges.
- ✓ Aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

The key to gut health: Plant diversity!

Plant diversity simply means eating as many different types of plants as we can. If we only eat a small range of high fibre foods, we do not benefit from the trillions of different good bacteria these foods contain.

Eating a variety of plant-based foods will help you increase your fibre intake, which supports a healthy gut. Your gut bacteria all need different types of plant food to thrive. Eating more fruit and veg is a good place to start, but for gut health the goal is beyond just fruit and veg. Recent research has shown that people who eat at least 30 different plant-based foods a week have more diverse gut bacteria than people who eat fewer than 10.



What counts?

- ✓ fruit and vegetables
- ✓ wholegrains
- ✓ beans, lentils, chickpeas
- ✓ nuts and seeds
- ✓ herbs and spices

For every different type of plant eaten, you get one 'plant point', with herbs and spices getting a quarter point each.

Good gut health does not need to be time-consuming or costly. Simple changes can make a big difference.

You gain plant points every time you eat a different food from the list above. Just count up every different type of food each week.

For example, a **wholegrain bread** sandwich with ham, cheese, **tomato** and **lettuce** would be **three** points. One for wholegrain bread, one for tomato and one for lettuce. Remember this is not about portions, this is about variety. A full loaf of bread would still only be one point.

Final thought

After a few weeks of increasing fibre, you may start to notice a difference in your energy levels and how your body feels after each meal. Keep trying to add variety and build up plant points to notice greater improvements in your health and how you feel.

If you would like to learn more or require more information and support, please get in touch!

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