



Ontario Home Economics Association

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For Immediate Release

Fibre ~ for a Long and Healthy Life

by Amy Snider, P.H.Ec.

With the proliferation of “low-carb” messages saturating the media, Canadians are even more at risk of not meeting the daily recommendations for fibre. Fibre is a nutrient that needs attention. While evidence of its healthy benefits has become common knowledge, North Americans are consuming only about half the fibre recommended by health professionals. Studies have shown that eating 25 to 40 grams of fibre a day will have a positive impact on disease prevention and everyday vitality. Diets with adequate fibre have been linked to the prevention of several major diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers. Also, fibre can be a valuable component of any weight loss program.

Fibre is the key to a healthy digestive system. There are two major types of fibre ~ soluble and insoluble. Insoluble fibre found in foods such as wheat bran, vegetables, fruits, seed and nuts absorbs water and speeds the transit of food waste as it moves through your digestive system. This allows your body to eliminate food waste efficiently. Soluble fibre, found in foods such as barley, rye, oats and fruits with pectin, dissolves in water and forms a gel that slows the movement of food through the digestive system. Soluble fibre helps your body to absorb key nutrients while carrying away harmful cholesterol. Both types of fibre use water to perform their functions, so it is important to drink at least six to eight glasses a day. When the digestive system is in proper order, it is more likely that the body is able to meet its nutritional needs.

Immersed in a competitive workforce, people are scrambling when it comes to mealtimes. Convenience foods have inundated grocery-store shelves with instant “gourmet” dinners ready at the push of a microwave button. They are a quick fix, but in terms of nutritional content, convenience foods generally leave much to be desired, especially in their fibre content. Whole foods such as fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grain and legumes are the foods of choice for healthy eaters.

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Deciding to eat more fibre does not necessarily mean a drastic lifestyle overhaul. It is important to add high-fibre foods to your diet gradually to reduce the incidence of uncomfortable side effects. Simply making some small changes can have a big impact.

Ten Simple Ways to Increase Fibre Intake:

1. Sprinkle wheat and/or oat bran on top of your morning cereal or into smoothies, or use bran instead of breadcrumbs in your burgers and meatballs.
2. Substitute the real thing for your morning juice; eat whole oranges and other fruits instead of just drinking juice.
3. Substitute whole-grain breads and rolls for your usual white-bread versions. Seven- and twelve-grain, pumpernickel, rye and other dense breads have great flavour and require less enhancement with butter as they are generally moister than white breads.
4. Eat vegetarian one or two nights a week. Try a colourful tofu stir-fry, bean-enhanced salad suppers, or hearty minestrone soup.
5. Choose whole-wheat pastas more often for your favourite pasta dishes.
6. Eat legumes frequently; stir into pasta dishes, soups and stews, and sprinkle on salads.
7. Eat fresh and frozen berries. Try raspberries on cereal, strawberries in spinach salad or blueberries layered with granola for dessert; they are nutritious and delicious.
8. Substitute whole-wheat flour for white in your baking; in many recipes, up to three-quarters of the amount of all-purpose flour can be replaced with whole-wheat flour.
9. Try an appetizing variety of new grains such as brown rice, wild rice, whole-wheat couscous, barley and quinoa in main-course and side dishes.
10. Put vegetables first. Plan menus around the vegetables on your plate at mealtimes instead of starting with the protein and adding vegetables as an afterthought.

Fibre-rich foods are delicious and contain a wealth of other valuable nutrients as well. Eat well and enjoy life longer!

Adapted from *Fiber Boost: Everyday Cooking for a Long, Healthy Life*, Key Porter Books 2004 by Amy Snider.

Amy Snider is a Professional Home Economist and author of the new cookbook, *Fiber Boost: Everyday Cooking for a Long, Healthy Life*. As a food consultant, Amy creates recipes, analyses nutritional content and develops new product ideas. She also writes articles for magazines and does food styling for television.

The Ontario Home Economics Association, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

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