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Fibre Fills

Fibre is a type of carbohydrate that the body is unable to digest. Usually, carbohydrates are broken down into sugar molecules called glucose. Fibre cannot be broken down into sugar and, therefore, passes through the body undigested. So: if we do not digest fibre, and it passes right through us, how is eating a high-fibre diet beneficial?

High fibre benefits

Fibre is commonly classified as soluble, which dissolves in water, or insoluble, which doesn't dissolve.

Soluble fibre aids in lowering glucose levels and in lowering blood cholesterol. Examples of foods with soluble fibre include oatmeal, nuts, beans, lentils, apples, and blueberries.

Insoluble fibre can help food move through your digestive system. Foods with insoluble fibres include whole wheat products (especially bran), quinoa, brown rice, legumes, leafy greens like kale, nuts, seeds, and fruits with edible skins like pears and apples.

There are many benefits to a high-fibre diet including:

- **Lowers cholesterol levels:** Soluble fibre may help lower total blood cholesterol by lowering 'bad' cholesterol levels. Studies also show that high-fibre foods may have other heart health benefits

such as reducing blood pressure and inflammation: [check out this video](#) from the American Heart Association.

- **Helps control blood sugar levels:** Fibre, particularly soluble fibre can slow the absorption of sugar and help improve blood sugar levels which also may reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- **Maintains bowel health:** A high-fibre diet may lower your risk of developing hemorrhoids, diverticular disease (small pouches in your colon), and lowers the risk of colorectal cancer.
- **Normalizes bowel movements:** Enough said!
- **Aids in achieving healthy weight:** High-fibre foods tend to be more filling, so you are likely to eat less and be satisfied longer. High-fibre foods often have fewer calories for the same volume of food.
- **Improves our gut microbiome and reduces chronic inflammation:** The fermentation of indigestible fibres results in the production of short chain fatty acids (SCFA) that may prevent chronic diseases of the bowel, and may be useful in the treatment of ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, and antibiotic-associated diarrhea.
- **Helps you to live longer:** Increasing dietary fibre, particularly cereal fibre, is associated with a reduced risk of dying from cardiovascular disease and all cancers.

How to increase your fibre intake – including recipes!

Even though fibre is a vital part of our diet, most of us are getting less than half the recommended amount. A healthy adult needs 25 to 38 grams a day, but surveys show that the average Canadian daily intake is about 14 grams.

Therefore, think about adding more fibre to your diet, but do so at a gradual pace! Adding a lot of fibre too quickly can promote intestinal gas, abdominal bloating, and cramping. Increase your fibre intake gradually over a few weeks, and allow the natural bacteria in your digestive system to adjust to the change.

It is also important to drink plenty of water, as fibre works best when it absorbs water on its journey through your digestive system. Here are some ways you can add more fibre to your diet:

- **Start your day with a high-fibre breakfast cereal** with five or more grams of fibre per serving. Look for cereals with 'whole grain', 'bran' or 'fibre' in the name. Or, add a few tablespoons of unprocessed wheat bran to your favorite cereal.
- **Switch to whole grains.** Switch to foods that list whole wheat, whole-wheat flour, or another whole grain as the first ingredient on the label. Incorporate brown rice, wild rice, barley, whole-wheat pasta, or bulgur wheat to your meals.
- **Slip more fibre into your baked goods.** Substitute whole-grain flour for half or all of the white flour when baking.
- **Add more lentils and legumes.** Beans, peas, and lentils are excellent sources of fibre. Add kidney beans to canned soup or a green salad. Or, make nachos with refried black beans, lots of fresh veggies, whole-wheat tortilla chips, and salsa.
- **Eat more fruit and vegetables.** Eating five to seven servings a day is easier than you think!
- **Eat high-fibre snacks.** Aside from fresh fruits and vegetables, enjoy low-fat popcorn, whole-grain crackers, or even a handful of nuts or dried fruit.

Fill up on fibre for the many health benefits it brings. Here are five foods that are great sources of fibre, and some recipes to check out!

- [Black beans](#)
- [Avocados](#)
- [Sweet potatoes](#)
- [Brussel Sprouts](#)
- [Fresh figs](#)

Sources:

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/microbiome/>

<https://www.heartandstroke.ca/healthy-living/healthy-eating/fibre-and-whole-grains#:~:text=Fibre%20is%20a%20vital%20part,intake%20is%20about%2014%20grams.>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/fibre/art-20043983>

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates/fibre/>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.