



Media FAQ

General Information About Fiber

Q1. What is dietary fiber?

A1. Dietary fiber is a broad term that describes the indigestible material found in plant foods, also known as roughage, which is found mainly in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes. There are two types of fiber: soluble (may dissolve in water) and insoluble (does not dissolve in water).

Q2. Where is fiber found?

A2. Fiber is only found in plant foods and foods derived from plants. Sources include oats, beans, peas, many types of fruits and vegetables and the outer layer of psyllium seeds, known as psyllium husks – a key ingredient in certain fiber supplements.

Q3. What is psyllium?

A3. Psyllium is a natural fiber grain that yields 60 to 70 percent soluble fiber, eight times that of oat bran. Psyllium is used as an active ingredient in certain fiber supplements. Cultivated predominantly in India and Pakistan, psyllium grows in sandy and silty soils.

Q4. How does fiber work?

A4. Fiber is the indigestible material in plant foods, also known as roughage. It works by adding bulk, which keeps other foods moving through the digestive system. Certain types of soluble fiber may absorb in water and turn into a gel which binds to food, sugars, cholesterol and fats in the stomach and carries them through the digestive tract. Insoluble fiber passes through the system largely intact and promotes regularity. Both are needed to maintain a strong bill of health.

Q5. What is the recommended daily intake for fiber?

A5. The National Fiber Council recommends that on average, adults consume 32 grams of fiber daily. Most Americans get less than half of this (10-15 g). Anyone who wishes to increase their daily fiber intake should do so gradually, and increase their water intake as well. It is important to note that 32 grams is a recommendation and may be adjusted for various health conditions. Anyone considering altering their diet should first speak with their primary health care provider.

Q6. Are Americans getting enough fiber in their diet?

A6. Few Americans know about the many health benefits of fiber, nor do they proactively seek ways to add more fiber to their diets. In fact, the average American barely consumes half the recommended amount of fiber needed per day, averaging an intake of 10-15 grams of fiber daily. At this level of intake, most Americans don't realize fiber's potential health benefits.

Q7. Are there easy ways to increase my fiber intake?

A7. To successfully increase your daily fiber intake, take steps such as substituting whole grain bread for white, a handful of nuts for potato chips, or start the morning off with a bowl of oatmeal. Eat a variety of high-fiber foods throughout the day, replace foods low in fiber with higher fiber alternatives and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. If you can't reach the recommended daily amount of fiber through food alone, the NFC recommends taking fiber supplements, such as Metamucil. See the NFC's free "A Fresh Look at Fiber" brochure for more tips on easy ways to add fiber to your diet.



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Q8. At what rate should I add fiber to my diet?

A8. Gradually. Too much fiber too soon can cause a bloated feeling and abdominal cramps. It can take several weeks to add the recommended amount of fiber to your diet. While working up to the NFC's recommended daily amount of 32 grams of dietary fiber, be sure to drink plenty of fluids.

Q9. What happens if you don't get enough fiber?

A9. Fiber helps control satiety and regularity. If you don't get enough fiber you may experience irregular digestion. A high-fiber diet also lowers the risk of developing many life-threatening diseases and conditions, such as heart disease, certain forms of cancer, diabetes, stroke and obesity.

Q10. Who needs fiber?

A10. Everyone needs a steady base of fiber in their diet every day. People with certain medical conditions may need more or less than others. For example, health care professionals often place diabetes and cardiovascular patients on a high-fiber diet.



Fiber and Your General Health

Q1. Why do I need fiber?

A1. Fiber helps manage regularity and constipation, but also lowers the risk of developing many life-threatening diseases and conditions, such as heart disease, certain forms of cancer, diabetes, stroke and obesity.

Q2. Is it possible to have too much fiber?

A2. Moderation is key. The NFC recommends that, on an average, adults consume 32 grams of fiber per day. However, this number may fluctuate with some health conditions. If you have a specific concern, consult your health care provider.

Q3. Will eating fiber help me maintain my weight?

A3. Yes. Because fiber is not digested by the body, it does not add weight when consumed. Rather, it flows through the body to help absorb sugars, fats and cholesterol from food, and then carries them through the digestive track. Fiber also cleanses the body by promoting regularity. Additionally, fiber keeps you feeling full for longer, which can minimize or eliminate unnecessary snacking.

Q4. Can fiber help during pregnancy?

A4. Yes. Pregnant women experience many changes to their bodies during the nine months of pregnancy, and fiber helps control some of this irregularity.



Fiber and Disease

Q1. Can fiber prevent diabetes?

A1. Yes. By maintaining a high-fiber diet and an otherwise healthy lifestyle, fiber can help control and prevent certain types of diabetes. In the small intestine, soluble fiber binds to sugars, cholesterol and fat and slows their absorption into the body. If you have diabetes or are at risk for developing diabetes, speak with your health care provider about creating a high-fiber diet for your specific needs.

Q2. Does fiber lower cholesterol?

A2. Soluble fibers found in beans, breakfast cereals, fruits and vegetables have been shown to reduce cholesterol. While whole grain fibers have the strongest effect on reducing cholesterol, several studies have shown that psyllium, an all natural fiber supplement, is more effective than other soluble fibers, taken in equal amounts, in decreasing cholesterol. Just seven grams of soluble fiber per day from psyllium may reduce the risk of heart disease. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration now allows products containing psyllium to state that these items, eaten as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. Oats and barley are the only foods that can make this claim.

Q3. How does fiber lower cholesterol?

A3. Soluble fiber, found in oat bran, oranges, apples, carrots and dried beans, absorbs water and turns into a gel. Moving through the small intestine, this substance entraps cholesterol components. Fewer cholesterol components in the small intestine lead to a lower cholesterol count in the blood and ultimately the heart.



Fiber and Food

Q1. What are some high-fiber foods?

A1. You may be surprised to know that you already eat many high-fiber foods. Common grocery items such as oatmeal, raspberries, whole grain bread and kiwis are examples of high-fiber foods. For a full chart of high-fiber food and recipes, please visit www.NationalFiberCouncil.org.

Q2. Why is weight management an important issue with the NFC?

A2. Dietary fiber is probably best known for its ability to prevent or relieve constipation. What many Americans don't realize is that fiber also provides many other health benefits. It is the goal of the NFC to educate Americans on how fiber benefits overall health, and in particular the role fiber plays in the fight against obesity and weight-related health issues.

The NFC focuses on weight management because:

- Currently, one in four adults and one in five children lives with obesity in the United States
- Those overweight can suffer from many health issues, including diabetes, heart disease and hypertension
- Studies show that diets rich in whole grains and dietary fiber can help prevent obesity
- Some researchers calculate that if Americans double their daily intake of fiber, they are likely to eat 100 less calories per day. This can shave off 10 pounds of yearly weight gain
- Getting the recommended amount of daily fiber helps improve overall health

Q3. Does fiber have calories?

A3. Fiber itself is calorie free. However, fiber is found in foods which contain calories. Read the entire food label to ensure you are happy with your high-fiber food choice.

Q4. Where can I find a sample fiber menu?

A4. For a sample fiber menu, visit www.NationalFiberCouncil.org and look on the "Healthy Eating" page.

Q5. What foods have a high amount of fiber?

A5. A product or a food item can be labeled "high-fiber" when it contains more than 5 grams of fiber per serving. High-fiber foods include whole grain breads and pastas; fruits such as blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, oranges, dried apricots, dates, prunes and raisins; and many vegetables, including broccoli, corn and beans (kidney, lima, chick peas, lentils and soy).

Q6. How can I increase my fiber intake if I'm on a low-carb diet?

A6. Low-carb dieters should evaluate their carbohydrate choices. Foods comprised of complex carbohydrates are essential for the body, while those with simple carbs and starches should be minimized. You may consider using a fiber supplement to add fiber to your low-carb diet.

Q7. What is the difference between foods labeled "whole grain" and those labeled "high-fiber"?

A7. When shopping for breads, choose whole grain products. A 'whole grain' versus a multi grain means just that, the whole grain kernel is intact. A grain's fiber is located in the bran, its most outer layering, which is removed in the refining process.



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In addition, some food manufacturers will flag an item with the words “high fiber, good source, or more or added fiber.” The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) defines these descriptors and food products must meet these standards:

If your label says . . .

High fiber
Good source
More or added fiber

The fiber count is

5 grams or more per serving
2.5 to 4.9 grams per serving
At least 2.5 grams more (than traditional food) per serving



Fiber Supplements

Q1. What are fiber supplements?

A1. Fiber supplements (also known as bulk-forming laxatives) are available without a prescription to help increase consumption of fiber. Supplements primarily consist of natural polysaccharides (e.g. psyllium) and semisynthetic or synthetic polysaccharides (methylcellulose and calcium polycarbophil, respectively). While fiber supplements have been traditionally used to promote laxation and regularity, the National Fiber Council advocates the use of all natural dietary fiber supplements to increase overall health and well-being.

Q2. How do fiber supplements work?

A2. Fiber supplements work by increasing volume and water content of stool. That action stimulates peristalsis (the muscular contractions in the digestive tract), decreases colonic transit time and improves stool consistency.

Q3. What are the differences between fiber supplements?

A3. Taking a fiber supplement can provide added health benefits to a high-fiber diet. Consumers have a variety of choices when choosing a supplement, so it is important to understand the main differences between supplements.

As a general rule, powder fiber brands deliver soluble fiber to your body, while solid dose brands can deliver either soluble or insoluble, depending on the product. In addition to knowing which type of fiber you are consuming, scan the label to see if the active ingredient is natural. Some supplements are produced from all natural materials like psyllium or inulin while others use synthetic ingredients.

Q4. My doctor recommended I take a fiber supplement. Which brand should I choose?

A4. It depends on what you are taking it for. Many cardiologists recommend fiber supplements to their patients, but not all fiber supplements contain soluble fiber which has proven cholesterol-lowering abilities. If you are taking a supplement for heart health, Metamucil powder containing psyllium (an all natural soluble fiber source) is your best option. Whatever your condition, you should choose a supplement derived from a natural source such as psyllium.

Q5. When should I take my fiber supplement?

A5. It's best to take your fiber supplement with a large glass of water. Fiber supplements contain all of the fiber and none of the liquids you would find in a high-fiber food, so it's important to wash it down with lots of water.

Q6. Are fiber supplements addictive?

A6. No. Taken in their proper dosage, fiber supplements are not addictive. When choosing a fiber supplement, look for a natural supplement that works well with your diet routine.

Q7. Are there side effects associated with fiber supplements?

A7. Natural fiber use is often associated with bloating and gas. In contrast, semisynthetic fiber and synthetic fiber are less likely to cause bloating and gas. However, abdominal cramping, bloating, flatulence and distension are common side effects. Allergic reactions have been reported but are uncommon. When introducing fiber supplements into your diet it is important to slowly increase the amount of fiber and increase your water intake to avoid adverse effects.



Q8. I heard an expert on the *Today Show* say that fiber supplements are not recommended. Are you saying they are safe and recommended?

A8. The general consensus among members of the National Fiber Council is that fiber should come from food first. The reality is, according to a 2007 survey conducted by the NFC, the average American does not consume the recommended amount of fiber needed per day. According to the survey, most American's aren't even familiar with foods that are high in fiber:

- While 65 percent of those surveyed try to eat foods that are high in fiber, more than two thirds of respondents (88 percent) did not know the number of grams of fiber recommended per day for a healthy body. The NFC recommends 32 grams of fiber per day for a healthy body.
- 62 percent of respondents believe that meat is a source of fiber. Note: There is no fiber in meat. Fiber can only be derived from plant products.

Based on these findings, the NFC believes that fiber supplements should be used to fill the "fiber gap" for those individuals who can't reach the recommended daily goal with food alone.



About the NFC

Q1. What is the National Fiber Council?

A1. The National Fiber Council is a prominent group of recognized health care professionals, including experts in digestive disease, pharmacy, nutrition and exercise. The NFC was created to serve as a primary resource for information about the benefits of fiber to consumers, media and health care professionals.

Q2. Why and when was the NFC created?

A2. The NFC launched in 2004 to address the growing fiber deficit in the United States. The Council exists to raise awareness about the national fiber deficit and to educate Americans about the benefits of dietary fiber, the risks associated with not getting enough fiber in your diet and to offer viable solutions on how to increase daily fiber intake.

Q3. Who sits on the Board?

A3. The National Fiber Council is currently comprised of eight active Board members, each a national thought leader in his or her area of study/practice. Board members include:

James W. Anderson, M.D., Chair – Professor of Medicine and Clinical Nutrition, University of Kentucky. Dr. Anderson does clinical practice, teaching and research related to weight management, lipids, diabetes and nutrition. He has authored over 350 published studies and directs the University of Kentucky Health Management Resources Weight Management Program. Dr. Anderson founded the Obesity Research Network, a group of academic leaders studying obesity. He is the author of “Dr. Anderson’s High Fiber Fitness Plan.”

Pat Baird, Vice-chair, M.A., R.D., F.A.D.A. – Ms. Baird is noted for her expertise in the areas of osteoporosis, weight management, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal disorders. She is an award-winning author and truly dedicated to the field of nutrition.

Rick Davis, P.A. – Mr. Davis is a senior physician assistant in the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition at the University of Florida, College of Medicine in Gainesville. He is especially interested in gastrointestinal motility disorders and has authored more than 40 clinical and research articles.

Stefanie Ferreri, PHARM.D., C.D.E. – A specialist in nonprescription medication therapy, Dr. Ferreri, is a clinical assistant professor at the School of Pharmacy, University of North Carolina. She is a nationally renowned pharmacology speaker and serves as co-director of the UNC's community pharmacy residency program practice. Dr. Ferreri is also a certified diabetes educator.

Mary Knudston, DNSc, NP – Dr. Knudston is the Director of the Family Nurse Practitioner Program at the University of California Irvine (UCI) and serves as the Division Chief and Director of Clinical Operations for family medicine overseeing all of the clinical practice sites for family medicine at UCI. Her work has been recognized by a variety of organizations, including the Nurse Practitioner Journal, North American Menopause Society and the State of California.

Ashraf Koraym, M.D. – Dr. Koraym is a clinical assistant professor of cardiology at Ohio State University Medical School. With more than 15 years of dedicated research to cardiology and pharmacology, Dr. Koraym is a staunch promoter of heart health.



Valerie Waters – As *US Weekly*'s 2002 "Hottest Trainer of the Year," Ms. Waters is a premiere expert in the fields of fitness and exercise. She works closely with clients such as Jennifer Garner and Jessica Biel to educate them about healthy eating and to devise a well-balanced nutrition plan high in fiber.

Christine Williams, M.D., M.P.H. – Dr. Williams is vice president and medical director of Healthy Directions, Inc., a non-profit organization focused on promoting child health and nutrition. A board certified pediatrician, she has been a pioneer in developing comprehensive health education programs for children and their families for more than 25 years.

Q4. How often does the NFC meet?

A4. The National Fiber Council assembles once a year for an annual meeting. During this time, Board members review the year's activities, share and present news and studies emerging within their fields and discuss methods to best communicate the benefits of a high-fiber diet to consumers and health care professionals. The result is a diverse group of Board members, each armed with the information necessary to serve as an advocate for high-fiber diets within their professional and academic communities. The Board participates in conference calls and peer article reviews throughout the year.

Q5. How are Board members selected?

A5. Board members are selected according to discipline, expertise and interest in fiber. Each Board member is a proven thought leader in his or her field and must be passionate about educating consumers and health care professionals about the importance of dietary fiber.

Q6. Are the Board members compensated for their work?

A6. All NFC Board members receive a modest stipend for their important work on the Council. This money helps pay for their time out of the office, research, writing, and outreach to the public and to health care professionals.

Q7. How does the National Fiber Council promote fiber?

A7. The National Fiber Council currently hosts a Web site, www.NationalFiberCouncil.org, where consumers and health care professionals can learn about fiber, read the latest news about fiber, get tips and ideas for how to increase their daily fiber intake and take control of their health. The NFC also produces educational materials for consumers and health care professionals and attends medical and professional meetings and exhibitions.

Q8. How are educational materials developed?

A8. Educational materials are based on scientific data and the medical expertise and clinical experience of the NFC Board members. Board members participate in the writing, review and approval of each NFC educational piece.

Q9. Who funds the NFC?

A9. Procter & Gamble Health Sciences Institute (P&GHSI) is the charter sponsor of the Council. The P&GHSI scientists believe that consumers need to better understand the benefits of a high-fiber diet and the role it plays in their short and long-term health. Other sponsors of the NFC are welcome.

Q10. Are Metamucil and Fibersure (which are marketed by P&G) the reason the NFC was created?



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A10. No. The NFC is not paid to endorse Metamucil, Fibersure or any other individual fiber supplements. The NFC was created to raise awareness and educate Americans about the benefits of dietary fiber.

Q11. Does the NFC participate in and/or attend consumer events?

A11. The NFC attends health fairs and other consumer events when appropriate.

Q12. How can I contact the NFC?

A12. To contact the NFC, please visit www.NationalFiberCouncil.org or call 1-866-749-5296.

Q13. Are National Fiber Council Board members available for media interviews?

A13. Yes, all National Fiber Council Board members are available for media interviews. To schedule an interview, please contact:

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