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Fiber – A “Super Star Nutrient”

Dietary Guidelines for Americans highlights the health benefits of high-fiber, low-fat foods. The largest segment of MyPyramid is comprised of grains, cereals, and breads, which provide fiber for the American diet.

The National Academy of Sciences recommends children need the equivalent of their age plus 5 grams of fiber. For example a 6 year old should have 11 grams and a 17 year old 32 grams. Men under 50 years need 38 grams and women about 25 grams per day.

Increase fiber gradually in small amounts to allow your system to adjust. Drink extra water to avoid abdominal discomfort.



WHAT IS FIBER OR ROUGHAGE?

- Fiber is the part of plants that cannot be digested by the body.
- **Soluble fiber** delays food passage and digestion. Sources are apples, pears, strawberries, citrus fruits, vegetables, seeds, oats, dried beans, oat bran, barley bran, and rice bran.
- **Insoluble fiber** speeds up digestion and has a laxative effect. Good sources include wheat bran, corn bran, whole grain products, vegetables, fruit skins, and nuts.

GOOD SOURCES OF FIBER

- ✓ Dried beans and legumes, such as split peas, pinto beans, black-eyed peas, black beans, etc.
- ✓ Various whole grains such as wheat, rice, oats, barley found in bread, crackers, breakfast cereals, pasta, popcorn, and rice.
- ✓ Fruits and vegetables – particularly with peel left on.
- ✓ Nuts and seeds.

WHY FIBER?

- It lowers blood cholesterol. Several studies have shown that eating a high fiber and low-fat diet can lower blood cholesterol and therefore, help prevent heart disease.
- Fiber produces bulk to correct constipation or diarrhea and keeps the system moving for proper elimination.
- Natural fiber foods are high in minerals and vitamins.
- It helps prevent and treat diverticulitis, a disorder of the large intestine.
- It may help maintain a healthy weight. High fiber food fills you up and satisfies the urge to overeat.

*Food and Nutrition Services
can assist in providing
nutrition information.
Call 703-813-4800 and
ask for a Registered Dietitian.*