

Fibre

What is it?

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Dietary fibre is found in cereals, fruits and vegetables. Fibre is made up of the indigestible parts or compounds of plants, which pass relatively unchanged through our stomach and intestines. Fibre is mainly a carbohydrate. The main role of fibre is to keep the digestive system healthy. Fibre also helps you feel fuller for longer, can improve cholesterol and blood sugar levels and can assist in preventing some diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and bowel cancer.

Fibre comes in 3 different forms.

- 1) Soluble fibre. This fibre helps to slow the emptying process in our stomachs, which helps you feel fuller. It also helps to lower cholesterol and stabilise your blood glucose levels. This is found in fruits, vegetables, oats and legumes.
- 2) Insoluble fibre. This absorbs water to help to soften the contents of our bowels and support regular bowel movements. It also helps to keep us full and keep the bowel environment healthy. This is found in wholegrain breads and cereals, nuts, seeds, wheat bran and the skin of fruit and vegetables.
- 3) Resistant starch, while not traditionally thought of as fibre, it acts in a similar way. Resistant starch is the part of starchy food (approximately 10 per cent) that resists normal digestion in the small intestine. It is found in many unprocessed cereals and grains, unripe bananas, potatoes and lentils.

A diet high in fibre aids to improve the health of the digestive system. The digestive system is lined with muscles that massage food along the tract from the moment a mouthful is swallowed until the eventual waste is passed out of the bowel. This process is known as peristalsis. Since fibre is relatively indigestible, it adds bulk to the faeces.

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Soluble fibre soaks up water like a sponge, which helps to bulk out the faeces and allows it to pass through the gut more easily. It acts to slow down the rate of digestion. This slowing down effect is usually overridden by insoluble fibre, which does not absorb water and speeds up the time that food passes through the gut.

Intake

The average intake of fibre should be approx. 25gm per day for females, and 30gm per day for males.

Increasing Fibre

Add into your day extra veggies like kale, spinach, corn, broccoli and avocado. Fruits like bananas, pears and apples will help improve your fibre intake, and cereals/legumes like raisin Bran, red kidney beans, oats and aired popcorn will also be beneficial to your overall content.

