

ENGLISH



Continenace
Foundation
of Australia

HEALTHY DIET AND BOWELS

Supported by the Australian Government's
National Continenace Program



Healthy diet and bowels

A healthy diet containing plenty of different fibre rich foods, lots of fluids as well as exercise is recommended to keep our bowels healthy and regular.

Fibre can help protect against diverticular disease, haemorrhoids, constipation and chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, and can also help with controlling your weight.



What is fibre?

Fibre is found only in foods that come from plants. This includes vegetables, fruits, beans (legumes), nuts, seeds and cereals (breakfast cereals, bread, pasta and rice).



The following foods are fibre rich

Vegetables and fruits

Choose fresh, canned, frozen or dried such as sultanas, figs, prunes, and dates.

Cereal foods – high fibre choices

- High fibre breakfast cereals such as natural muesli, bran cereals and oat cereals
- High fibre (wholemeal, wholegrain or grainy) bread, rolls, flat bread and crackers
- Brown rice, wild rice or brown pasta
- Grains such as barley, buckwheat, burghal, chia, corn, millet, oats, quinoa, rice, rye, semolina, sorghum, spelt and wheat



Beans (legumes)

All beans and peas are fibre rich and examples include: black-eyed beans, borlotti beans, butter beans, cannellini beans, chick peas, haricot beans, kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, mung beans, soy beans and split peas.

Foods made from these such as hummus are fibre rich.



Nuts and seeds

All seeds such as flax, sunflower, sesame and poppy seeds, and all nuts such as almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia, peanuts, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts.

How much fibre should I have?

Aim for at least 25–30g of fibre each day

See the table below for the amount of fibre in different foods.

HIGH FIBRE CHOICE	FIBRE(g)	LOW FIBRE CHOICE	FIBRE(g)
½ cup cooked green or orange vegetables	2½	1 cup vegetable juice	0
1 piece of fruit	2	1 cup fruit juice	0
1 slice grainy or wholemeal bread	2	1 slice white bread	1
1 cup cooked brown rice	1½	1 cup cooked white rice	1
Breakfast cereal: 2 wheat biscuits or ¾ cup rolled oats or untoasted muesli	3½+	One bowl of white or refined cereal e.g. flakes of corn	½–1
Beans (½ cup)	7		
Mixed nuts (1/4 cup)	3		



To help you achieve 25–30g fibre each day, try the following:

1. Have plenty of vegetables (aim for 5–6 serves every day)
2. Choose at least two serves of fruit every day (with skin where possible)
3. Choose high fibre cereal foods (wholemeal or wholegrain) more often than white or refined varieties
4. Include beans, nuts and seeds regularly in your diet

Getting enough fibre each day

#1

Choose at least 5–6 vegetable serves each day (plus the skin if edible) of fresh, frozen, dried or low salt canned vegetables.

What is a serve of vegetable?



1/2 cup



1/2 cup

- Half a cup of cooked broccoli, spinach, carrots, pumpkin, sweet corn and peas



1 cup

- One cup of green leafy or raw salad vegetables



1/2 medium

- Half a medium potato, sweet potato or one medium tomato

Limit your intake of fried vegetables such as potato chips or crisps

#2

Choose at least two serves of fruit each day (plus the skin if possible). You can have fresh, stewed, frozen, dried or canned fruit in natural juice (not syrup).

What is a serve of fruit?

1
medium



1
medium



2
small



- One medium apple, banana, orange or pear
- Two small apricots, kiwifruit or plums
- One cup diced or canned fruit (no added sugar)

1½
tbs



4



- 30g dried fruit (1½ tablespoons of sultanas or 4 dried apricots)

Some fruits have long been used to keep bowels regular



Figs



Kiwifruit



Prunes



Dates

#3

Choose high fibre cereal foods (wholemeal or wholegrain) more often than white or refined varieties.

Choose high fibre or wholegrain breakfast cereals



- Oats, porridge, natural muesli, high fibre wheat or bran cereals

Add fibre to your favourite breakfast cereals

- Sprinkle on nuts or seeds e.g. LSA (linseed, sunflower and almond)
- Add 1-2 tablespoons of bran or flax seed
- Mix your preferred cereal with a very high fibre breakfast cereal

Choose wholemeal bread or grainy bread, toast, rolls, pita bread, pasta or rice



- Wholemeal or wholegrain bread, rolls, pita, lavish, mountain bread or dark rye breads
- Brown pasta (or mix brown pasta with white pasta)
- Brown or wild rice (or mix white rice with brown rice)
- Wholemeal lasagna sheets
- Wholemeal rice in stir fries, risottos and curries
- Grainy crisp bread instead of white crackers



Add high fibre grains when cooking or preparing meals

- Soups: add beans, lentils, split peas or barley
- Salads: use quinoa, brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat or cracked wheat (burghal) for example tabouli
- Baking:
 - Use wholemeal flour or oats instead of white flour, for example muffins, pikelets or making oat crumble toppings
 - When a well-risen product is required such as scones or cakes use half white flour mixed with half wholemeal flour
 - Use wholegrain bread crumbs instead of white for crumbing fish or chicken



#4

Include beans, nuts and seeds regularly in your diet



Breakfast

- Sprinkle nuts and seeds on breakfast cereal
- Try baked beans or peanut paste on high fibre toast

Cooking or preparing meals

- Add lentils, whole barley or split peas to soups and meals such as lasagna, casseroles or stews, or choose dishes based on beans such as dahl
- Add beans to pasta dishes such as spaghetti bolognese, burritos, chilli con carne or tacos



Salads

Add canned beans, four-bean mix, chickpeas or toasted nuts

Snacks

- Trail mix (unsalted nuts and dried fruit)
- Popcorn – plain or lightly salted
- Wholegrain crackers and hummus



What about fluids?

Fibre and water work together to keep us regular. Without enough fluid, increasing fibre may result in constipation, so always have enough to drink each day.

Fluid includes water, fruit juice, tea, coffee, milk (on cereals), soup, jellies and ice cream. The best fluid to drink is water. More fluid may be required in hot weather and when exercising.

What drinks should I choose?

Water is preferred over drinks with added sugar (such as soft drinks, cordials, sports and energy drinks) and fruit juice, as water has no calories and will not result in weight gain. Water is also preferred over diet soft drinks and fruit juice as the acidity of these drinks can break down the hard covering on our teeth called enamel.





What about tea and coffee?

- Tea and coffee can count as part of your fluid intake
- Tea and coffee (or caffeine drinks) may need to be reduced if you have urinary incontinence. Discuss this with a continence health professional if you have any concerns.

Boosting your fibre: slowly does it



- Increase your fibre slowly. Try making one change per week to avoid gas, bloating, cramps and diarrhoea from building up fibre intake too quickly.
- Plenty of fluids help the fibre work better, so drink more as you increase your fibre.

Fibre supplements



Try to avoid making up for a low fibre eating plan by relying mainly on fibre supplements or foods with concentrated sources of fibre such as bran or psyllium husk. These may give you enough fibre but you will miss out on the mixture of fibre which is needed to protect the gut.

If you feel you need a fibre supplement and would like more information, talk to a continence health professional or Dietitian.

Specialised dietary advice may be required from a Dietitian for conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, faecal incontinence, gluten intolerance, and food sensitivities.



National Continence Helpline
1800 33 00 66

**Phone continence nurse advisors for free advice,
resources and information about local services.**

References available on request

© Continence Foundation of Australia

Supported by funding from the Australian Government under the National Continence Program