

South Warwickshire



NHS Foundation Trust

Warwickshire Dietetic Service

**Increasing the amount of fibre in
your diet**

This information can be given out by dietitians, doctors and practice nurses. It provides information on how to increase dietary fibre intake for conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (constipation predominant), constipation, diverticular disease and high cholesterol.

Increasing the amount of fibre in your diet

What is Dietary Fibre?

Fibre, or roughage, is found in plant foods. It is not digested by the body so this makes it important for bowel health. Fibre does not provide any calories, minerals or vitamins, but is important as part of a balanced diet. There are two main types: **soluble** and **insoluble**.

Why should I eat fibre?

- There is strong evidence that eating plenty of fibre is associated with a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and bowel cancer. High fibre foods can also help to protect against diverticulitis, irritable bowel syndrome and haemorrhoids.
- High fibre foods are generally low in calories and tend to be more filling than low fibre foods. They can therefore help to reduce the amount you eat if you are trying to lose weight.
- Fibre promotes the growth of 'good' bacteria in your bowels.
- Fibre adds bulk and softens your stool by holding water. This can help to prevent and relieve constipation.

Insoluble fibre

This type of fibre passes through your gut mostly unchanged, absorbing water and adding bulk. It helps other food and waste products move more easily. It is tough and fibrous and is found in the stalks, skins and leaves of vegetables and the outer coating of grains. Good sources of insoluble fibre include wholegrain bread, wholegrain cereals, skins, pips and seeds.

Soluble Fibre

Soluble fibre is found inside fruit, vegetables, pulses (e.g. kidney beans, baked beans, lentils) and some grains such as oats and barley. Soluble fibre forms a gel when mixed with liquid. Your natural gut bacteria feed and multiply on it, giving softer, bulkier stools. Soluble fibre can also help to reduce your risk of heart disease by reducing cholesterol in your blood.

Fruits and vegetables usually contain a mixture of soluble and insoluble fibre. Aim for at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day (refer to page 4 for portion sizes).

How much fibre should I eat?

Government guidelines published in July 2015 state that our dietary fibre intake should increase to 30g a day, as part of a healthy balanced diet. Children under the age of 16 years require less. For children over 2 years calculate fibre intake by adding their age in years plus 5g. For example for a four year old, 9g fibre per day.

Pre-packed foods should all state the amount of fibre they contain on the label. A food product is 'high fibre' if it contains at least 6g of fibre per 100g, and a 'source of fibre' if it contains at least 3g of fibre per 100g. A sudden increase in fibre may cause discomfort (wind and bloating), so increase the fibre in your diet gradually.

Fluids

Fibre absorbs fluid so make sure you drink more fluids as you increase the amount of fibre you have. Try to drink 8-10 cups a day. This can include water, squash, fruit or herbal tea, juice, tea and coffee (alcohol does not count).

Increasing the amount of fibre in your diet

How can I increase the amount of fibre I eat?

Low fibre food	Portion and amount of fibre (g)	High fibre alternatives	Portion and amount of fibre (g)
White bread	1 medium slice (1.0)	Wholegrain bread Wholegrain rolls Wholegrain flour Wholegrain pitta bread High fibre crackers Rye bread	1 medium slice (2-4) 1 roll (3-4) 100g (9.0) 1 pitta (3-4) 1 cracker (1.0) 1 slice (2.0)
White rice White pasta Potatoes, peeled	100g cooked (1-3) 75g uncooked (1-3) Medium (1-2)	Brown rice Bulgur wheat Whole wheat couscous Wholegrain pasta Potatoes with skins on e.g. jacket potatoes, new potatoes	100g cooked (2-4) 75g uncooked (6-7) 100g (2.5) 75g uncooked (6-7) 175g (3-4)
Cereals: Rice-based Corn-based	50g portion (0-0.5) 50g portion (0-1.5)	High fibre cereals Porridge oats Muesli Weetabix Oat cakes Chapattis made with wholegrain flour	30g portion (5-8) 30g (uncooked) (2-4) 50g (4-5) 2 biscuits (4.0) 1 biscuit (2.0) 1 chapatti (2-3)
Tinned fruit & skinless fruit	100g serving (0-1.0)	Whole fruit with skin	100g portion (2-4)
Peeled and well cooked vegetables	3tbsp. (1-2)	Peas, sweetcorn, baked beans, cucumber, whole tomatoes, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, green beans, spinach and salad.	3 tbsp. (2-3)
Meat, fish and substitutes		Any dishes with beans, vegetables, peas, lentils, nuts or seeds added.	
Dairy produce		Yoghurt containing fruit, nuts or muesli .	
Drinks		Smoothies made from whole fruit, not juice, fruit juice with 'bits'.	
Miscellaneous		Vegetable soup Jam and marmalade with pips and rind	

Increasing the amount of fibre in your diet

Fruits and vegetables: What counts as a portion?

Food type	Examples of one portion
Large fruit	1 large slice of melon, papaya or pineapple
Medium fruit	1 apple, banana, orange, peach or pear
Small fruit	2 plums, satsumas, apricots or kiwi
Dried fruit	3 dried apricots, 3 dried dates or 2 dried figs 1 heaped tablespoon raisins, sultanas or dried cherries
Fruit juice or smoothie	1 small glass (150ml) fruit juice or smoothie
Cooked, frozen or tinned vegetables	3 heaped tablespoons
Pulses and beans	4 heaped tablespoons (170g/6oz) cooked beans, chick peas, lentils or dahl 4 heaped tablespoons (170g/6oz) baked beans in tomato sauce

Further tips for increasing your fibre

1. Gradually increase the fibre in your diet. Make one change at a time and let your body adjust before making any other changes.
2. Eating regular meals will help you to develop a more regular bowel habit.
3. Keep active – exercise helps food to move through your bowels.

It is not recommended to add additional bran to your food, as it reduces the absorption of some minerals such as iron, zinc and calcium.

Increasing the amount of fibre in your diet

Meal ideas with more fibre

Breakfast

- Wholegrain cereal with chopped or dried fruit
- Baked beans on wholemeal or granary toast
- Wholemeal, granary or high-fibre white bread topped with fruit e.g. banana
- Yoghurt with a large helping of fresh or dried fruits

Light meals

- Wholemeal, granary, rye bread or wholemeal pitta bread to make sandwiches
- Add salad to sandwiches or jacket potatoes
- Baked beans with jacket potatoes or on toast
- Add pulses e.g. beans, lentils, chick peas or whole wheat pasta to soups
- Vegetable soup
- Crackers or oat cakes with hummus and salad

Main meals

- Add pulses to stews, casseroles and curries
- Keep the skin on your vegetables and potatoes
- Add vegetables to all meat and poultry dishes
- Use whole wheat pasta and brown rice instead of white
- Add extra vegetables to sauces such as Bolognese, curry and chilli

Dessert

- Add chopped fruit to sugar free jelly or puddings or yoghurts
- Rice pudding or custard mixed with stewed, fresh or dried fruit
- Fresh fruit salad
- Fruit crumble made with wholemeal breadcrumbs, oats and chopped nuts or use wholemeal flour

Snacks

- A piece of fresh fruit
- Wholemeal or granary toast with tomato
- Vegetable sticks
- Whole wheat or rye crispbreads or crackers or oat cakes
- Mixed dried fruit, seeds and nuts
- Mix linseeds or flaxseed into yoghurt
- Oat-based wholegrain cereal bar (*be aware of the sugar content)

Equality Statement

At South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust we are fully committed to equality and diversity, both as an employer and as a service provider. We have a policy statement in our Equality Strategy that clearly outlines our commitment to equality for service users, patients and staff:

You and your family have the right to be treated fairly and be routinely involved in decisions about your treatment and care. You can expect to be treated with dignity and respect. You will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

You have a responsibility to treat other service users, patients and our staff with dignity and respect.

Our information for patients can also be made available in other languages, Braille, audio tape, disc or in large print.

PALS

We offer a Patient Advice Liaison Service (PALS). This is a confidential service for families to help with any questions or concerns about local health services.

You can contact the service by the direct telephone line on 01926 600 054 by email:

Pals@swft.nhs.uk or by calling in person to the PALS Office which is located in the Lakin Road entrance to the hospital.

If you have any queries about your diet, please contact us on 01926 600818 and select option 3.

Dietetic Department
George Eliot Hospital
Nuneaton

Dietetic Department
Warwick Hospital
Warwick

Author	Registered Dietitian
Department	Dietetics
Contact no	01926 600818
Published	October 2018
Review	October 2023
Version no	1.1
SWH No	01130



Approved by
SWFT Patient
Information
Group