



Fruits and Vegetables for More Fiber

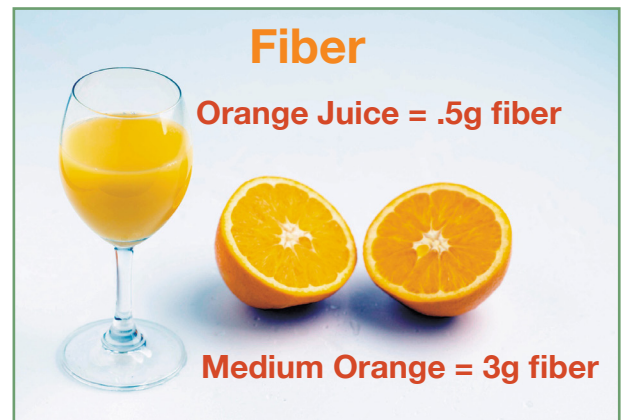
We all need fiber to be healthy, and fiber comes only from plant foods. Foods of animal origin such as meat, eggs, chicken, fish and cheese do not contain any fiber. So what is dietary fiber? It's all the parts of a plant that your body cannot digest—and yet fiber is essential to maintaining good health.

There are two main types of fiber: soluble (it dissolves in water) and insoluble (it does not dissolve in water). Soluble fiber dissolves in water and creates a kind of gel in the digestive tract, which contributes to satiety (the feeling of fullness) by slowing down the digestive process. Soluble fiber also helps maintain healthy blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Insoluble fiber passes through your stomach, intestines, and colon relatively unchanged and aids the movement of other foods through your system, providing a laxative effect that helps keep your system working regularly.

The best way to get enough fiber is to **eat a wide range of whole plant-based foods**, including fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and nuts. How much is enough? The Institute of Medicine recommends 14 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories consumed—which means about 25 to 38 grams daily for most of us.

There are many sources of fiber in the produce section of the supermarket. Try these tips for getting fiber with flavor into your diet:

- **Eat peels:** Make sure you are getting the most fiber possible from your fruits and vegetables by eating them whole. Wash, but don't peel, fruits and vegetables like apples, pears, potatoes, summer squash, and zucchini. For example, one whole medium apple contains 4 grams of fiber, but only 2 grams of fiber without its peel.
- **Favor fruits over juices:** Although juice provides important nutrients, the fiber content gets lost in the juicing process. Tuck into an orange or grapefruit, or grab a bunch of grapes to get the full dose of fiber. A cup of orange juice has just a half gram of fiber, but one medium naval orange offers 3 grams of fiber.
- **Add variety:** Eating the same food over and over again can get monotonous and unappetizing. Trying new ingredients and keeping menus varied makes eating healthy more appealing. Try these sources of dietary fiber in your recipes:
 - **Soluble fiber:** apples, bananas, beets, berries, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, citrus, grapes, onions, peaches, pears, peas, plums, potatoes.
 - **Insoluble fiber:** apples, bell peppers, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, grapes, peas, potatoes, tomatoes.



Don't worry too much about the different types of fiber. If you're eating a wide variety of delicious whole foods, you'll be covering your bases—and enjoying your meals.