



DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM  
www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

# Eating Fiber to Manage Constipation

Adding fiber into your diet can be a helpful way to ease the discomfort of constipation. This handout will explain what fiber is, how much you should eat every day and how you can add fiber into your diet. It will also explain how much fiber is in different foods.

## WHAT IS FIBER?

Fiber is a nutrient in food that helps keep your stomach and intestines healthy. Fiber comes from plants, like wheat, bran, vegetables and fruits, and has many important jobs in your body. Fiber helps move food through your stomach and intestines and helps make stools easier to pass. It also helps you pass stool more regularly.

## HOW MUCH FIBER SHOULD I EAT?

The amount of fiber you should eat depends on your age. Fiber is counted in grams. See the charts below to see how many grams of fiber you should eat every day.

### MALE

Age	Grams of Fiber Per Day
1-3 years	19
4-8 years	25
9-13 years	31
14-18 years	38
19-30 years	38
31-50 years	38
51-70 years	30
70 and older	30

### FEMALE

Age	Grams of Fiber Per Day
1-3 years	19
4-8 years	25
9-13 years	26
14-18 years	26
19-30 years	25
31-50 years	25
51-70 years	21
70 and older	21

## HOW CAN I ADD FIBER TO MY DIET?

There are many ways you can add fiber to your diet. Make sure to add fiber into your diet slowly over the course of a few weeks. This will help you feel less bloated and gassy. See the back of this handout for a food and fiber list.

Here are some suggestions on how to add fiber to your diet:

- **Look for food that has 3 or more grams of fiber per serving.** You can find this on the nutrition label.
- **Serve whole grain breads, pastas, cereals and rice.** Whole grains include 100% whole wheat bread, brown rice and bran.
- **On nutrition labels, look for food that lists 100% whole wheat, rye, oats or bran as the first ingredient.**
- **Serve beans as a side with meals.**
- **Sprinkle chia seeds, ground flaxseed or bran on food.**

Amount Per Serving		Calories from Fat 40	
		% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b>	8g		12%
Saturated Fat	1g		5%
Trans Fat	0g		
<b>Cholesterol</b>	0mg		0%
<b>Sodium</b>	160mg		7%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	37g		12%
Dietary Fiber	4g		16%
Sugars	1g		
<b>Protein</b>	3g		
Vitamin A			10%
Vitamin C			8%
Calcium			20%
Iron			45%

\* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	Less than	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Look for foods that have 3 or more grams of fiber per serving. Fiber is also called dietary fiber.  
Image courtesy of Wikicommons.

## WHICH FOODS HAVE ENOUGH FIBER TO HELP EASE CONSTIPATION?

There are many types of food with enough fiber to help ease constipation. Here are boxes that show you how much fiber is in different foods. All of the foods are made from plants, like wheat, vegetables and fruits because fiber is found only in plants.

### Grains: Cereal

- 1 ounce of corn bran (22g)
- ½ cup of Fiber One® bran cereal (10g)
- 1 ounce of oat bran (12 g)
- 1 ounce of wheat bran (12g)
- ½ cup of All-Bran® cereal (10g)
- 1 ounce of rice bran (6g)
- ½ cup of uncooked oatmeal (4g)
- ½ cup of Mini-Wheats® (4g)
- ½ cup of Raisin Bran® (4g)



### Grains: Side Dishes

- 1 cup of pearled barley (6g)
- 1 cup of whole wheat spaghetti (6g)
- 1 cup of quinoa (5g)
- 3 cups of air-popped popcorn (4g)
- 1 cup of brown rice (4g)
- 1 cup of wild rice (3g)



### Grains: Breads

- 1 slice of whole wheat bread (2-3 g)
- Whole wheat frozen waffles (2-3g)



### Fruits

- 1 cup of blackberries (8g)
- 1 cup of raspberries (8g)
- 1 medium pear with skin (6g)
- 1 medium apple with skin (4g)
- 1 cup of blueberries (4g)
- 1 cup of strawberries (3g)
- 4 dried figs (3g)
- 1 medium orange (3g)
- 1 cup of strawberries (3g)
- ½ cup of prune puree (3 g)



### Vegetables

- 1 cup of frozen green peas (14g)
- 1 cup of cooked acorn squash (9g)
- ½ of a medium avocado (9g)
- 1 cup of cooked Brussels sprouts (6g)
- 1 cup of frozen edamame (6g)
- 1 cup of cooked cauliflower (5g)
- 1 cup of cooked broccoli (5g)
- 1 cup of cooked spinach (4g)
- 1 medium sweet potato with skin (4g)
- 1 cup of cooked zucchini squash (3g)



### Beans, Nuts and Seeds

- 1 cup of navy beans (19g)
- 1 cup of cooked lentils (16g)
- 1 cup of kidney beans (16g)
- 1 cup of black beans (15g)
- 1 cup of pinto beans (15g)
- 1 cup of garbanzo beans (12g)
- 1 ounce of flaxseed (8g)
- 1 ounce of almonds (4g)
- ½ cup of pumpkin seeds (4g)



## WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO EASE MY CONSTIPATION?

There are many things you can do to help ease constipation. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Drink lots of water!** Water will help your body process fiber faster.
- **Drink pear or prune juice.** These juices help stool move faster through the body.
- **Get enough exercise. Children ages 6-17 should get at least 60 minutes (1 hour) of exercise every day. Adults should get at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of exercise every week.** Exercising helps increase and regulate how often you pass stool.
- **If you take supplements, talk to your doctor to see if any of the supplements can make constipation worse.** Certain supplements, like iron or calcium, can make constipation worse.

### Did you know?

*There are other health benefits to fiber. It reduces the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, obesity and diverticular disease, a disease that affects the colon.*

Rev. 4/2017

## Down Syndrome Program

Mass General Hospital for Children  
55 Fruit Street, Suite 6C  
Boston, MA 02114

[www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome](http://www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome)

For more information please call

617-643-8912