MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

MassGeneral Hospital for Children™

DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM
www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

Eating Fiber to Manage Constipation While on a Gluten-Free Diet

Managing constipation by adding fiber into your gluten-free diet can be a helpful way to ease the discomfort of constipation. This handout will explain fiber, how much fiber you should eat every day and how you can add fiber to a gluten-free diet. It will also explain how much fiber is in certain gluten-free 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.
- **Build your diet around fresh fruits, vegetables, dried beans and lentils, peas, plain nuts and nut butters.**
- **Serve gluten-free whole grains, like quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth, millet and teff.**
- **Use almond flour in recipes instead of white flower.**
- **Serve beans as a side with meals.**
- **Sprinkle chia seeds, ground flaxseed or bran on food.**

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

Image courtesy of Wikicommons.

WHICH GLUTEN-FREE FOODS HAVE ENOUGH FIBER TO EASE CONSTIPATION?

There are many types of gluten-free foods with fiber to help ease your 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

1 ounce of corn bran (22g)
1 ounce of gluten-free oat bran (12 g)
1 ounce of rice bran (6g)
¼ cup of cooked amaranth (6g)
1 cup of cooked buckwheat (5g)
½ cup of uncooked, gluten-free oatmeal (4g)
3 cups of air-popped popcorn (4g)
1 cup of brown rice (4g)
1 cup of wild rice (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 CHILD'S CONSTIPATION?

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

- **Drinks lots of water!** Water will help his or her body process fiber faster.
- **Drink pear or prune juice.** These juices help stool move faster through his or her body.
- **Get enough exercise. Children should get at least 60 minutes (1 hour) of exercise every day. Teens and 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

For more information please call

617-643-8912