

More Fiber for your Children?

Yes! Here's Why and How.



Fiber is an important nutrient that most children (and parents) are not getting enough of each day. As parents, you do your best to feed your family healthy foods, but you may need help with choosing good sources of fiber. Read on for more information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about fiber.

- How much fiber do children need?
- Why is fiber important?
- What are some ways to give meals a fiber boost?
- How do you read Nutrition Facts?

How much fiber do children need?

There are different fiber recommendations for children based on energy needs, age, or weight.

Eat 5. A simple way to make sure your children are getting enough fiber is by making healthful food choices. If your children are eating at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day along with other foods that are good sources of fiber, there is really no need to count fiber grams.

Add 5. If you find it helpful to keep track of numbers, add 5 to your children's age. For example, a 5-year-old would need about 10 grams of fiber each day. *Note:* The total daily recommended amount of up to 25 grams for adults can be used as a general guideline for children.

Why is fiber important?

Fiber helps make us full and keeps things moving in the digestive tract. A diet that includes good sources of fiber may help prevent constipation. These foods also are good sources of nutrients and vitamins that may help reduce the risk of heart disease, certain types of cancer, and obesity.

Good sources of fiber include vegetables, fruit, beans, peas, nuts, and fiber-rich whole-grain breads and cereals.

What are some ways to give meals a fiber boost?

There are simple ways to add fiber to your family's diet. But getting your children to eat what is served may not be as easy. Keep in mind that it may take many tastes before children will like a new food. And even if they never learn to like broccoli, there are many other choices.

Breakfast for starters

It's important to start each day with a healthy breakfast. Breakfast gives children energy to carry through an active morning. Studies have shown that children who don't eat breakfast have trouble staying alert and concentrating during the first hours at school.

- Choose whole-grain cereals and other whole-grain foods that have at least 3 grams of fiber and less than 10 to 12 grams of sugar per serving.
- Add fruit to a bowl of fiber-rich whole-grain cereal.
- Add vegetables to a breakfast wrap made with a whole wheat tortilla.

Did you know?

Constipation is a common childhood concern. One symptom of constipation is abdominal pain (stomachaches, cramping, nausea). Constipation happens when stools (poop) become hard and sometimes painful to pass.

Bowel patterns vary from child to child just as they do in adults. What's normal for your child may be different from what's normal for another child. If you have any concerns about constipation, talk with your child's doctor.

Top it off with fruit or nuts

- Top salads with nuts, fresh fruit, or dried fruit.
- Top plain yogurt with nuts or fresh fruit. Fiber-rich cereal also goes well with yogurt.
- Top low-fat frozen yogurt or ice cream with nuts or fresh fruit.
- Toss together a handful of raisins, fiber-rich whole-grain cereal, and nuts for an on-the-go snack.

Fresh Fruits	Serving	Fiber (g)
Raspberries	½ cup	4
Banana	1 small	3
Blueberries	½ cup	2
Strawberries	½ cup	1.5

Nuts	Fiber (g)
Almonds (about 12)	2
Peanuts (about 14)	1.5
Walnuts (about 7 halves)	1

Make it whole grain

- Switch to foods made with whole grains (see "How do you read Nutrition Facts?"). Or try to make half your grains whole grains.

Grains (1 cup cooked)	Fiber (g)
Rice (whole grain)	3.5
Rice (not whole grain)	0.5
Spaghetti (whole grain)	6.5
Spaghetti (not whole grain)	2.5

Bring on the beans

Beans and peas are part of 2 food groups. They can be counted as a vegetable or protein. As a vegetable, they are sources of dietary fiber and nutrients such as folate and potassium. As a plant protein, they are sources of zinc and iron.

Beans and peas can be a main or side dish and added to soups or salads. They are low cost and add lots of nutrition, texture, and taste!

Beans and Peas (½ cup cooked)	Fiber (g)
Lentils	8
Black beans	7.5
Kidney beans	6.5
Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)	5.5
Soybeans (green)	4

Eat your veggies

- Keep precut, raw vegetables like carrots, celery, and broccoli on hand for a snack. A little salad dressing on the side might make the veggies more appealing.
- Add vegetables to pizza, salads, soups, and sauces.

Vegetables	Serving	Fiber (g)
Sweet potato (baked, with skin)	½ potato	2.5
Potato (baked, with skin)	½ potato	2
Corn (canned)	½ cup	2
Carrots (raw)	½ cup	1.5
Peppers (sweet, green, raw)	½ cup	1.5
Broccoli (raw)	½ cup	1

How do you read Nutrition Facts?

Nutrition Facts can tell you all about the nutrients and ingredients in a food. Nutrition Facts can help you choose foods that provide the nutrition that's right for you, including fiber.

Dietary fiber is a nutrient listed under "Total Carbohydrate" on the Nutrition Facts.

- Excellent sources of fiber have 5 or more grams of fiber per serving.
- Good sources of fiber have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.

Look at the list of ingredients if you want to know if a food is made with whole grains.

- Not all foods labeled "whole grain" are a good source of fiber. Grains vary widely in their fiber content. For example, whole-grain wheat has more fiber than whole-grain brown rice or whole-grain oats.
- The amount of fiber in a whole-grain food can vary by brand.
- Whole grains include whole wheat, brown rice, bulgur, buckwheat, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal, whole oats, whole rye, and wild rice.

For more information

If you want to know how much fiber is in a food that does not have a Nutrition Facts label, you can look it up on Nutrition.gov at www.nutrition.gov/whats-food. This source was used to look up grams of fiber listed in this publication. You can look up other nutrients too.

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Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size	21 Biscuits (54g)	
Amount Per Serving	Cereal	with ½ cup skim milk
Calories	190	230
Calories from Fat	10	10
% Daily Value**		
Total Fat 1g*	2%	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	0%
Trans Fat 0g		
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g		
Monounsaturated Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%	3%
Potassium 200mg	6%	11%
Total Carbohydrate 46g	15%	17%
Dietary Fiber 6g	23%	23%
Sugars 11g		
Protein 5g		
Vitamin A	0%	4%
Vitamin C	0%	0%
Calcium	0%	15%
Iron	90%	90%
Thiamin	25%	30%
Riboflavin	25%	35%
Niacin	25%	25%
Vitamin B ₆	25%	25%
Folic Acid	50%	50%
Vitamin B ₁₂	25%	35%
Phosphorus	15%	25%
Magnesium	10%	15%
Zinc	10%	15%
Copper	10%	10%

* Amount in cereal. One half cup of skim milk contributes an additional 40 calories, 65mg sodium, 6g total carbohydrates (6g sugars), and 4g protein.
** Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values 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
Potassium		3,500mg	3,500mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

If a food company makes a claim about the fiber of a food, the grams of fiber must be listed under "Total Carbohydrate."

"Whole grain" on a food label means that some whole grain is included. Remember to select foods with whole grains that also are good sources of fiber.

Ingredients: Whole grain wheat, sugar, contains 2% or less of brown rice syrup, gelatin, BHT for freshness.

Vitamins and Minerals: Reduced iron, niacinamide, vitamin B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B₂ (riboflavin), vitamin B₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), zinc oxide, folic acid, vitamin B₁₂.

CONTAINS WHEAT INGREDIENTS.

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