



BalanceHealth[®] Newsletter

March 2010 | Written by the wellness experts at **eni**



Fiber – What is it Good For?

When it comes to fiber “How much do I need?” is the big question. According to current recommended daily intakes, before the age of 50 women should get 25 grams of fiber a day and men should get 38 grams. The requirements drop slightly after age 50 with women needing about 21g and men needing about 30g. Currently the typical American only gets about half of this.

Despite all the claims made about the healthy effects of a high fiber diet, many of us find it difficult to reach our daily recommended amount.

Here is some information to break down the terms and benefits of fiber:

A. Soluble Fiber - A viscous, gummy fiber found in fruits and veggies, oats and barley that is broken down by the bacteria in the stomach. This type of fiber is connected with lowering cholesterol and helps keep a lid on blood sugars to help

prevent diabetes. It slows the absorption of carbohydrates causing less demand for insulin. To see a consistent insulin sensitivity, a high fiber diet may need to be maintained over an extended period of time (more than 6 months).

B. Insoluble Fiber - This type of fiber is not broken down in the stomach and is tied to lower rates in heart disease as well as reduced blood pressure and lower risk of blood clots. Due to the fact that it is not broken down, it also results in more bulk for stool and plays a role in regularity, this may reduce the risk of diverticulitis and colon cancer. This fiber is in highest concentration in whole grains like wheat and may protect the heart by lowering blood pressure, reducing inflammation in arteries and reducing the risk of blood clots.

C. Purified Fiber - Isolated fibers like Inulin, Maltodextrin, polydextrose, and modified wheat starch have been modified to be resistant to human digestive enzymes. This fact allows manufacturers to label their content as fiber on packages. However, these



For more information or advice about Fiber and its benefits, contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling

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processed fibers have not been shown to have the same positive effects as intact fiber. These fibers can be classified as soluble or insoluble, yet the soluble fibers, for example, do not retain the viscous quality that is believed to be linked to many of the positive benefits related to a high fiber diet. While more studies have to be done, these fibers do not have all the same effects on cholesterol and diabetes that fiber from whole foods will have.

There are other possible benefits to a high fiber diet as well. Because fiber takes a while to digest it often helps to make you feel full longer so you are not hungry again too soon. When fiber is taken in through whole foods, like fruits and veggies, you are getting full on food that is relatively low in calories. These facts together may help you to maintain or lose weight over time!

While whole foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains individually may have more of one type of fiber

than the other, all of these foods have both types within them so it is good to get plenty of both types even if you are focusing on fiber intake for a particular health reason.

Even with all the research that has been completed, it is still difficult to pin down the specific effects of fiber on the body and these health concerns. This is true for a couple of reasons; for one, whole foods with high fiber content also tend to have a lot of other great nutrients that may have an effect on these health concerns, so it is impossible to place all benefits on the fiber content alone. Vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants are just a few of the other essential needs that come along with the whole fiber package.

In the end, it is certainly worth your while and health to incorporate more fiber into your diet. Try and stick to fiber in its naturally occurring form for the most benefit and be aware that even though your new favorite ice cream appears to be packed with fiber, it is not a reason to double up on portion sizes- you may not be getting all the great effects of fiber from the frozen treat but you are bound to get all the calories!

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