Kellogg's

factsheet

Fibre, a Partner for Health

Most of the population do not get the fibre they need

In fact, 8 out of 10 adults and school children are failing to reach the guideline daily amount of fibre in their diet. Not only are they increasing the possibility of short term problems such as slow digestive transit and constipation, but they are potentially missing out on the benefits that fibre provides. An adults diet should include 25g of dietary fibre each day. Nutritionists and dietitians agree that we all need to boost our fibre intake, which can be done by including more fruit, vegetables, certain wholemeal foods and bran based breakfast cereals. Be sure to drink more liquid as you increase your fibre intake and of course take regular gentle exercise.

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Most people know that fibre is good for a healthy digestive system and to prevent constipation, however, many don't realise that the benefits of fibre go way beyond digestion. Fibre also helps with satiety and weight control, a high fibre diet also reduces the risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Some studies have also shown increased fibre can improve mood and general well being.

What is fibre?

Fibre is only found in plant foods. In plants, fibre provides structure and strength, and when eaten in the diet fibre is not digested and passes through the digestive tract. While tempting to assume that something not digested is unimportant, the reality is far from this: fibre provides bulk to keep us feeling full and satisfied, helps the efficient passage of food through the gut, and provides a food source for the friendly bacteria that live in the lower gut. When the diet is low in fibre, the gut struggles to work well and leaves us feeling bloated and sluggish.

Fibre and children

Fibre is also important for children. There are no specific recommended intakes for children but a good guide that is often used by dietitians and nutritionists is the childs age +5, e.g a 5 year old child should have approximately 10g of fibre per day. Children who eat a wide variety of foods that are rich in fibre are likely to continue eating these foods in later years. Those over the age of five should gradually have the amount of dietary fibre increased.

Health benefits of fibre

There are two main types of fibre: soluble and insoluble, and they have different health benefits. Insoluble fibre (such as bran) is found mainly in wheat products such as wholegrain or bran breakfast cereals and wholemeal bread, fruits and vegetables. This helps to prevent constipation, bowel disorders and feelings of lethargy and fatigue. Soluble fibre is found in peas, beans, lentils, oats and some fruits. This helps: to slow the rate of digestion and absorption of food, regulate blood sugars and some soluble fibres such as oat can lower cholesterol. High fibre foods tend to be of a high nutritional value. Fibre is often accompanied by vitamins and minerals and inclusion in the diet will help to promote short and longer-term health and well-being. A few simple changes in eating habits can help most people to increase the level of fibre in their diet. Health professionals can help patients to consider the benefits of consuming more fibre and provide practical suggestions as to how this can be achieved.

The benefits of dietary fibre

Dietary fibre, eaten as part of a balanced diet, helps to ensure effective functioning of the intestines and can offer benefits in terms of the prevention and treatment of a number of health problems. As well as protection against cancer, fibre promotes good bowel health, avoiding constipation, bloating and indigestion. As levels of obesity in the population continue to escalate, research has shown that dietary fibre has an important role in satisfying appetite and in weight management, in addition to playing a potential role in controlling insulin levels. Dietary fibre resists digestion and therefore is not broken down and absorbed into the blood stream. It is for this reason that it plays such an important role in health.

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How does fibre help to maintain good health?

Fibre acts in a number of ways to help maintain good health, some examples include:

- Some types of fibre are broken down in the gut by friendly bacteria to produce health-promoting substances such as short chain fatty acids, which can help keep the inside of the bowel wall healthy[1].
- Recent research has shown that if people with low fibre diets double their intake of fibre the risk of colon cancer falls by 40%[2].
- People eating high fibre diets tend to be slimmer than those eating lower fibre diets[3,4]. High fibre diets can help weight loss by adding bulk to the diet without increasing the calorie content, helping to reduce hunger.
- High fibre diets help to prevent Type 2 diabetes (people with higher cereal fibre intakes are 64% less likely to develop diabetes)[5], and improve blood sugar control for people with diabetes[6].
- Both soluble and insoluble fibre can help reduce the risk of heart disease through cholesterol-reduction and the beneficial effects of phyto-nutrients. People with higher fibre intakes have been shown to be 29% less likely to get heart disease than those with lower fibre intakes[7].
- Research has suggested that eating high-fibre breakfast cereals (such as Kellogg's All-Bran or Bran Flakes) can help combat fatigue and improve mood[8].

Top tips for increasing fibre intake:

- Starting the day with a balanced breakfast, which includes a bowl of high fibre cereal, such as Kellogg's All-Bran, topped with fresh or dried fruit.
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Fresh is preferable but frozen, dried, canned (in natural juice) and a glass of juice all count.
- Wash fruit and vegetables well and leave skins on for added fibre (e.g. don't peel potatoes before boiling).
- Eat more wholegrain or granary bread, pasta and brown rice.
- Choose high fibre snacks such as Kellogg's All-Bran cereal bars or dried fruit and nuts.
- Try eating more beans, pulses and lentils – they're great in soups, salads and casseroles.

1 Macfarlane S and Macfarlane GT (2003) Regulation of short-chain fatty acid production. Proceedings of the Nutrition Society 62:67-22

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3 Lui s et al (2003) Relation between changes in intakes of dietary fibre and grain products and changes in weight and development of obesity in middle-aged women. American Journal Clinical Nutrition 78:920-927

4 Koh-Banerjee Pet al (2004) Changes to whole-grain, bran and cereal fibre consumption relates to 8-y weight gain among men. American Journal Clinical Nutrition 80:1237-1245

5 Motonen J et al (2003) Whole-grain and fibre intake and the incidence of Type 2 diabetes. American Journal Clinical Nutrition 77:622-629

6 Nutrition subcommittee of the Diabetes Care Advisory Committee of Diabetes UK (2003). The implementation of nutritional advice for people with Diabetes. Diabetes Medicine 20:786-807

7 Anderson JW (2004) Whole grains and coronary heart disease: the whole kernel of truth. American Journal Clinical Nutrition 80:1459-1460

8 Smith A, et al (2001) High fibre breakfast cereals reduce fatigue. Appetite. 37, 1-3