

How To Add Fiber To Your Meals

Fiber is the part of plant foods that the body can not digest. Eating more fiber can help your child prevent constipation, diabetes, and heart disease. Foods that contain a lot of fiber are filling, have lots of vitamins and minerals, and help children maintain a healthy weight.

Fiber should be added very gradually to give the body time to adjust. Drinking plenty of fluids helps fiber do its work.

How much fiber is enough?

You can find out how much fiber is in food by looking for the "dietary fiber" line on food labels. A simple rule of thumb: children ages 3-15 should aim for "age plus 5 grams" of fiber. For example, an 8-year-old should eat $8 + 5 = 13$ grams of fiber a day. Older teens should eat 20-35 grams of fiber a day.

Here are some easy ways to add fiber:

- Serve high-fiber cereal for breakfast, like bran flakes, oatmeal, or shredded wheat
- Add some raisins or a banana to breakfast cereal
- Serve whole fruit instead of juices
- Add a salad to lunch or dinner
- Eat apples, pears, and potatoes with the peels on
- Add beans (like kidney or navy beans) to salads and soups or eat baked beans as a side dish
- Popcorn makes a great high-fiber snack
- Fill 3/4 of the lunch or dinner plate with plant-based foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains

