

# Consumers should seek a variety of fiber sources to get the maximum health benefits

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Consumers who get fiber from many sources—both naturally occurring and added in manufacturing—may benefit more than people who limit their intake to a single type, according to a July 12th symposium at IFT15: Where Science Feeds Innovation hosted by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) in Chicago.

Researchers have found that Americans fall woefully short of the recommended amount of [dietary fiber](#) per day—38 grams for men and 25 grams for women. Men typically get around 18 grams and women get around 15 grams, said Julie Miller Jones, Ph.D, LN, CNS, professor emeritus at St. Catherine University. Furthermore, she cited a 2014 study that found a decline in the number of Americans who said they are trying to eat more fiber, from 73 percent in 2010 to 53 percent in 2014.

"The real problem is we don't know we have a problem," Jones said. "When you don't know you have a problem, you don't know how to address it. Thirty-five percent of the people in this country think we are getting enough fiber. So we really have a big job in terms of communication, in terms of telling people we aren't getting enough fiber."

Daily fiber intake is essential for good health, helping to control cholesterol, blood pressure, glucose, insulin and excess weight. It also regulates multiple facets of the digestive system. The Healthy People 2010 initiative set a goal of two fruits and three vegetables a day to help adults get the recommended amount of fiber, but just 32 percent eat that

amount of fruit and only 26 percent eat three vegetables. Jones said even those figures are misleading because when consumers choose fruits or vegetables, it's often low fiber options, such as one piece of lettuce and a thin slice of tomato on a sandwich.

Instead of looking at only plant-based sources, she said consumers should strive for a mix of fiber sources, including fiber that has been added to food in the manufacturing process. Some examples include fiber-fortified bread, cereals, yogurt and pasta. Research shows a combination of naturally occurring and added fiber can increase the chances of achieving the health benefits of a high-fiber diet.

In addition, Jones noted that each type of fiber carries its own unique benefits.

"We can't expect all fibers to have the same functions, just like we don't expect all vitamins to have the same functions," she said.

**More information:** [www.am-fe.ift.org/cms/](http://www.am-fe.ift.org/cms/)

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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