

Add fiber without extra calories

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(HealthDay)—Are you getting enough fiber in your diet? According to the National Fiber Council, if you're like most Americans, the answer is no.

Women need about 28 grams of fiber a day and men need 35 grams, but most of us clock in at 15 grams or less.

Why all the fuss about fiber? It helps keep [blood sugar](#) and hunger in check and your digestive system moving in the right direction.

It can also help protect you from the threat of [heart disease](#). According to a study published in the British journal *BMJ*, every 7-gram increase in fiber significantly lowers the risk of [heart attack](#) or stroke. That's the amount of fiber in just a cup of bran flakes or two apples.

Making some simple substitutions can increase your fiber, but not your calories. Choose whole wheat bread and pastas over white bread—it has more than twice the fiber.

Draw from this list to get the benefits of fiber and the nutrients in other whole grains:

- amaranth.
- barley.
- brown and wild rice.
- buckwheat.
- bulgur.
- cornmeal.
- farro.
- oatmeal and steel cut oats.
- quinoa.
- rye.
- spelt.

Or add raspberries to your yogurt or cereal—just half a cup packs about 4.5 grams of fiber. Instead of shredded cheese, top your salads with beans. Snack on fruits, nuts or unbuttered popcorn rather than chips or

pretzels. And don't forget to drink plenty of water. Fiber absorbs water and needs it to be effective.

More information: For more on the health benefits of fiber, visit the [American Heart Association](#).

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