

Fiber: It's not just for adults

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(HealthDay)—You know how important fiber is for overall health, making meals more filling and staying "regular."

But did you know that children need their fair share of fiber, too? And for the same reasons.

How much is enough? In general, the U.S. Institute of Medicine states that monitoring [fiber intake](#) should start early in life, and by their teen years, kids need nearly as much fiber as adults.

Grams of Fiber by Age:

- Ages 1-3: 19 g.
- Ages 4-8: 25 g.
- Ages 9-13: 26 g for girls, 31 g for boys.
- Ages 14-18: 26 g for girls, 38 g for boys.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says to remember the number 5—make sure kids eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day plus other good sources of fiber, like [whole grains](#).

The nutrition facts panel on packaged foods can help you make fiber-rich choices. If a food claims to be a good source of fiber, the fiber grams will be listed under carbohydrates. "Excellent" sources have 5 or more grams of fiber per serving. "Good" sources have at least 3 grams.

While whole grains make healthier choices than refined ones, some have more fiber than others. For instance, whole-grain wheat has more than whole-grain brown rice or oats. Also, the amount of fiber in the same grain can vary by brand so always read those labels. For variety, try new [grains](#) like bulgur, buckwheat, cornmeal and wild rice.

Simple changes can add up to a big improvement.

When serving veggies and fruit, don't remove edible peels—they contain fiber, plus there's less prepping for you. When you do cook produce,

avoid overcooking, which destroys fiber. Dried fruits, pumpkin and [sunflower seeds](#), and freshly made popcorn all make great high-fiber snacks.

Try to replace some protein and starchy veggies, like potatoes, with legumes—beans, peas and lentils. They're high in fiber, vitamins and minerals, and deliver plant-based proteins without the saturated fat of meat.

Keep in mind that the earlier in their lives that you start kids on a fiber-rich diet, the easier it will be for them to carry this healthy habit into adulthood.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has a video with tips on [getting kids to eat more fiber](#).

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