

Which foods are the best sources of dietary fiber?

June 12 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—The more we learn about fiber, the more important the

recommendation to get enough of it becomes.

Key Health Benefits of Fiber

- Lowering cholesterol
- Lowering [blood sugar](#)
- Easing elimination
- Improving heart health
- Possibly reducing colon cancer risk
- Helping with weight control

"Fiber" is actually an umbrella term for many different types in foods, so many that they've been likened to vitamins. They vary in function and amount needed, but all contribute to [better health](#).

Common thinking has been that [soluble fiber](#), typically found in oats and in legumes like peas and lentils, helps lower cholesterol and regulate blood sugar, while insoluble fiber, found in [wheat bran](#) and fruit and vegetables, helps keep you regular.

Turns out that it's not quite so black and white. Some soluble fibers like oat bran and psyllium do both jobs, while others don't seem to affect cholesterol. That's why getting a mix through a varied diet makes the most sense. But it's also important to get enough fiber every day.

While eating lots of fruit and vegetables is good for many reasons, realize that even eating the skins contributes only slightly to meeting daily fiber needs. Try to increase and vary the total amount of fiber-rich foods you eat by adding whole grains like wheat, oats, rye, barley, millet and buckwheat, along with legumes, nuts and seeds.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends 25 grams of fiber

a day for a 2,000 calorie diet.

Also look for foods with added bran or other sources of fiber. Read labels when comparing brands and choose the one that provides the most fiber.

Finally, keep in mind that you'll likely need to make some [food](#) swaps to meet fiber intake goals without adding more daily calories than you need in the process.

More information: The Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University has more on [fiber](#) and the richest sources.

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Citation: Which foods are the best sources of dietary fiber? (2019, June 12) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-06-foods-sources-dietary-fiber.html>

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