

DIETARY FIBER SUPPLEMENTS

Some patients have a hard time tolerating fiber in the amounts suggested. There are several stool softeners and bulking agents that are available over the counter. Psyllium fiber is found in products such as Metamucil. Overall our opinion is that dietary sources are better but if these products are the only ones that can be tolerated then it is okay. The key to any high fiber diet is to drink plenty of water. It is generally recommended to drink at least 64 ounces of water daily. Exercise is always a good part of a healthy lifestyle and we encourage this as well.



High Fiber Diet

A diet high in fiber and low in saturated fat along with a healthy lifestyle have been shown to reduce the risks of heart disease, cancer and other serious ailments. The average American consumes only about 5 to 10 grams of fiber daily whereas the recommended intake is around 30 to 35 grams per day. There are many ways to increase the fiber in your diet but we prefer a daily and consistent dietary source such as high fiber cereals (Fiber One or All Bran) and other food items. This brochure provides a basic framework to begin a change in your dietary habits that may help with problems such as constipation. If you are having problems with prolapse issues a high fiber diet is especially important as we work to help you.



Caption describing picture or graphic.



High Fiber Diet

Fiber, commonly thought of as roughage or bulk, is necessary to help with normal function of the bowel. The bowels move in a wave-like fashion to propel waste along the gastrointestinal tract. High fiber foods expand the inside walls of the colon which eases the passage of waste. Fiber in the intestinal tract also absorbs large amounts of water resulting in softer and bulkier stools. This result then eases constipation and other strains on the intestinal tract.

Fiber and Cholesterol

Soluble fiber sources such as oatmeal, oat bran (the best source), guar gum, psyllium seed, fruit pectin and gum Arabic form a gelatinous mucous gel when mixed with water. It has bowel regulating effects but helps also to bind cholesterol and carry it away in the stool lowering the amount that can be absorbed by your body. A high fiber diet should consist of both kinds of fiber, soluble and insoluble as is found in wheat bran and fruits and vegetables.

Fiber and Bowel Problems

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), also known as spastic colon, is one of the most common disorders of the lower intestinal tract. Symptoms include constipation and/or diarrhea, abdominal pain and cramping with spasms. Triggers such as stress or certain foods can cause an acute worsening of symptoms.

Diverticulosis is a condition of the colon in which pockets in the wall of the colon occur. They develop gradually over time and are associated with chronic constipation and IBS. These pockets can become infected causing diverticulitis or can break open and cause significant infection inside the abdomen. A high fiber diet is a critical part of treatment for these conditions as the stool is bulkier and reduces strain on the system. Even patients with IBS prone to diarrhea have better stool formation with high fiber. Overall improved bowel function results with such a diet improving symptoms.

High Fiber Sources

There are many sources of fiber in most food groups. Our recommendation is to include a high fiber cereal as a daily source.

FIBER ONE or ALL BRAN cereals are a

great source. 1 cup of these cereals has about 28 grams of fiber. The goal is to gradually work up to 1 cup per day. Start at 1/8 of a cup daily for a week then increase by about 1/4 cup weekly until at the full 1 cup. Mix it with yogurt or another cereal if the taste is an issue. You may like it sprinkled on a salad or mixed with raisins, dates etc to make a trail mix.

LEGUMES: kidney, pinto, navy, lima or baked beans

WHOLE GRAINS: wheat bran, oat bran

WHOLE FRESH FRUITS: the valuable fruit pectin is found in the skin and pulp. Figs, prunes and raspberries have the highest amount of fiber.

COOKED OR STEWS FRUITS: prunes and applesauce

GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES: lettuce, spinach, celery and broccoli

ROOT VEGETABLES: potatoes, turnips and carrots

NOT A GOOD SOURCE

Fiber pills are not a good source and should be avoided. They are costly and provide very minimal fiber.