

Dietary Fiber Tip Sheet

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) identify dietary fiber as a nutrient that is under-consumed by most Americans. Dietary fiber is found in plants and is a type of carbohydrate. Dietary fiber is essential for healthy diets because it helps prevent obesity, improves blood sugar levels, lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, promotes healthy bowel movements, improves digestion, reduces the risk of certain cancers, and reduces inflammation. Listed below are tips for increasing fiber in senior nutrition program meals, high-fiber ingredients to look for on nutrition labels, and a table of high-fiber foods.

Tips for Increasing Fiber

- Select whole grain breads and cereals by looking for “whole grain” as the first ingredient on the label.
- Limit refined and packaged grain products.
- Increase consumption of vegetables and fruits.
- Choose whole fruits and vegetables rather than fruit or vegetable juices.
- Include whole-grain flour or oatmeal in baked goods.
- Offer high fiber, minimally processed cereal for breakfast.
- Serve high-fiber foods, classified as having five or more grams of fiber per serving.
- Add legumes (e.g., beans, lentils, peas) to recipes, such as salads, soups, and pastas.

High-Fiber Ingredients on a Nutrition Label

Look for these ingredients, which indicate a good source of dietary fiber: Alginate, beta-glucan soluble fiber, cellulose, high amylose starch, inulin, pectin, polydextrose, psyllium husk, barley, brown rice, bulgur, oatmeal, quinoa, whole grain corn, whole oats, whole rye, and whole wheat.

Nutrition Education

Fiber plays an important role in the health of older adults. Fiber helps with digestion, feeling full during meals, and preventing constipation. It can also help reduce the risk of some chronic conditions and diseases. Most older adults do not consume enough fiber during the day. Providing nutrition education can help participants understand how increasing fiber intake benefits their health. This is especially relevant for senior nutrition programs where menus can be designed to naturally incorporate high-fiber, nutrient-dense options.

It is recommended to reduce highly processed, refined carbohydrates (e.g., white bread, packaged crackers, and ready-to-eat grain products) that displace real nourishment. It is recommended to have 2-4

servings of whole grains per day, with a preference for minimally processed forms, including oats, brown rice, quinoa, and traditionally prepared grain breads.

The nutrient recommendations in this tip sheet are based on general guidelines for older adults. Individual needs may vary depending on health conditions, medications, and other personal factors. Participants should consult with their doctor or a registered dietitian to determine the nutrient intake that is right for them. Visit the National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging [Nutrition Education](#) and [Nutrition Guidelines](#) pages for more resources.

High Fiber Foods

Fruits	Serving Size	Grams of Fiber
Apple (with skin)	1 medium	4.0 g
Banana	1 medium	3.0 g
Avocado	1	9.0 g
Raspberries	1 cup	8.0 g
Strawberries	1 cup	3.0 g
Orange	1 medium	3.0 g
Vegetables & Legumes	Serving Size	Grams of Fiber
Lentils, cooked	1 cup	15.5 g
Black beans, cooked	1 cup	10-15 g
Peas, cooked	1 cup	9.0 g
Carrots, raw chopped	1 cup	3.6 g
Edamame, prepared	½ cup	4.0 g
Brussels sprouts, cooked	1 cup	4.0 g
Broccoli, raw chopped	1 cup	5.0 g
Whole Grains	Serving Size	Grams of Fiber
Quinoa, cooked	1 cup	5.0 g
Whole wheat pasta, cooked	1 cup	4.0-6.0 g

Buckwheat, cooked	1 cup	4.5 g
Oatmeal, cooked	1 cup	5.0 g
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	2.0 g
Brown rice, cooked	1 cup	2.6 g

Adapted from [USDA Food Data Central](#) and [Mayo Clinic High-Fiber Foods](#).

Resources

[Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)

[Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#)

[Nutrition Needs for Older Adults](#)

[Using the Nutrition Facts Label: For Older Adults](#)

[USDA Approved Nutrition Information](#)

Disclaimer: All resources provided are from government websites.