

Fibre

Bladder and Bowel Service



Why is fibre important?

Fibre is an important part of a healthy diet. It can help to prevent heart disease, diabetes, weight gain and some cancers. It can also help improve digestive health, such as helping to prevent diverticulitis.

However, many people do not get enough fibre. On average most people in the UK get about 14g per day, but we should aim for at least 18g per day.

Fibre is only found in foods that come from plants. Foods such as meat, fish and dairy products do not contain any fibre.

There are two types of fibre: **soluble** and **insoluble**. Each type of fibre helps your body in different ways, so a healthy diet should contain both types. Often foods containing fibre contain a mixture of both: for example, an apple has insoluble fibre in its skin and soluble fibre in its flesh.

The best strategy for getting more fibre is to try to eat wholefoods (unprocessed foods). Aim for five servings of different fruit and vegetables a day.

However, if you have a digestive disorder, such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), you may need to modify the type and amount of fibre in your diet. Your GP or a dietician can advise you further about this.

Some of the text in this leaflet been adapted from the following:

NHS Choices. 2015. Why is fibre important? [online] Available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/chq/pages/1141.aspx?categoryid=51>. [Accessed 15 February 2016].

Tufts University School of Medicine. 2016. Fiber [online] Available at: <http://medicine.tufts.edu/Education/Academic-Departments/Clinical-Departments/Public-Health-and-Community-Medicine/Nutrition-and-Infection-Unit/Research/Nutrition-and-Health-Topics/Fiber>. [Accessed 24 October 2016].

Soluble fibre

Soluble fibre attracts water and forms a gel which slows down digestion and makes you feel full. It can control diarrhea/loose stools and soak up bad cholesterol.

Foods that contain soluble fibre include:

- Oats, barley and rye
- Fruit, such as bananas and apples
- Root vegetables such as carrots and potatoes
- Beans
- Golden linseeds

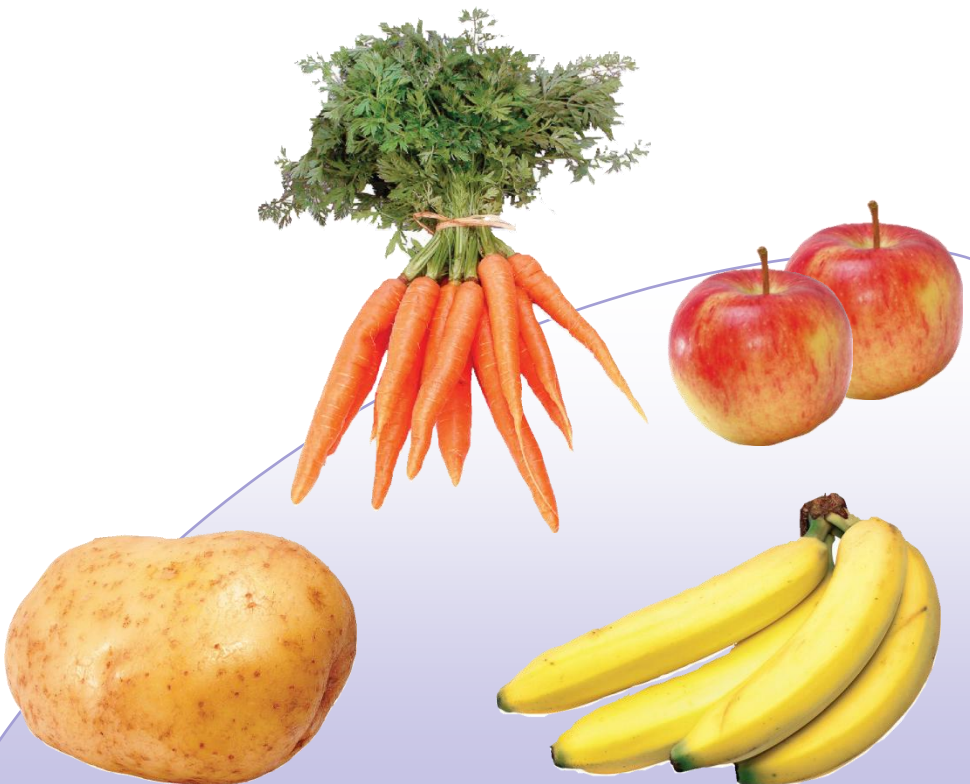


Table 1: List of foods rich in soluble fibre

Food	Soluble fibre (g)	Insoluble fibre (g)	Total dietary fibre (g)
Cereals			
Oatmeal – 1 cup	2	2	4
Barley, cooked – ½ cup	1	3	4
Vegetables			
Baked beans – ½ cup	3	3	6
Kidney beans – ½ cup	3	3	6
Parsnips, cooked – ½ cup	2	2	4
Brussels sprouts, cooked – ½ cup	2	1	3
Squash, winter, cooked – ½ cup	2	1	3
Beans, string – ½ cup	1	1	2
Cabbage, cooked – ½ cup	1	1	2
Sweet potato, baked – ½ medium	1	1	2
Turnip, cooked – ½ cup	1	1	2
Broccoli, cooked – ½ cup	1	1	2
Kale, cooked – ½ cup	1	0	1
Courgette, cooked – ½ cup	1	0	1
Fruit			
Pear, fresh – 1 large	3	2	5
Plum, fresh – 5 small	2	2	4
Peach, fresh – 1 medium	1	1	2
Prune, dried – 3 fruits	1	1	2
Grapefruit, fresh – ½ medium	1	0	1

Insoluble fibre

Insoluble fibre cannot be digested. It passes through your gut without being broken down and helps other foods move through your digestive system more easily. It helps prevent constipation. If you have loose stools you should limit the amount of insoluble fibre in your diet. Try not to take it on an empty stomach.

Foods that contain insoluble fibre include:

- Whole wheat products
- Nuts and seeds (except golden linseed)
- Fibrous vegetables
- Raisins and grapes



Table 2: List of foods rich in insoluble fibre

Food	Insoluble fibre (g)	Soluble fibre (g)	Total dietary fibre (g)
Cereals			
Bulgar wheat, cooked – ½ cup	3	1	4
Spaghetti, whole wheat, cooked – 1 cup	3	1	4
Wheat germ, ready to eat – ¼ cup	3	1	4
Rice, brown, cooked – ½ cup	2	Trace	2
Whole wheat bread – 1 slice	2	Trace	2
White bread – 1 slice	1	Trace	1
Multigrain bread – 1 slice	2	Trace	2
Wheat bran, dry – ¼ cup	6	Trace	6
All-Bran – ⅔ cup	12	1	13
Raisin Bran – ¾ cup	5	1	6
Cheerios – 1 ¼ cups	3	1	4
Muesli, raisin, almond, dates – ½ cup	2	1	3
Shredded Wheat – ⅔ cup	3	Trace	3
Grape Nuts – ¼ cup	2	Trace	2
Corn Flakes – 1 ¼ cup	1	Trace	1
Special K – 1 ⅓ cups	1	Trace	1

Food	Insoluble fibre (g)	Soluble fibre (g)	Total dietary fibre (g)
Vegetables			
Lentils, cooked – ½ cup	7	1	8
Carrots, cooked – ½ cup	2	1	3
Spinach, cooked – ½ cup	2	1	3
Cauliflower, cooked – ½ cup	2	Trace	2
Corn, cooked – ½ cup	2	Trace	2
Fruits			
Apple, fresh – 1 medium	3	1	4
Blueberries, fresh – 1 cup	4	Trace	4
Strawberries, fresh – 1 cup	3	1	4
Apricot, fresh – 3 fruits	2	1	3
Cherries, fresh – 10 fruits	2	Trace	2
Dates, dried – 3 fruits	2	Trace	2
Raisins, dried – ¼ cup	2	Trace	2
Nuts			
Walnuts – ¼ cup	2	Trace	2
Peanuts, dry roasted – ¼ cup	2	1	3

In order for fibre, especially soluble fibre, to do its job you need to stay hydrated. Aim to drink 1.5 litres (3 pints) of fluid each day.

If your stools are numbered **1-3** on the Bristol Stool Chart (pebbly or hard stools) you need to include a higher proportion of foods containing insoluble fibre in your diet.

Type 4 on the Bristol Stool Chart is ideal. If your stools are type **5-7** (soft blobs, fluffy or watery) you need to include a higher proportion of foods containing soluble fibre.

Bristol Stool Chart

Type 1



Separate hard lumps,
like nuts (hard to pass)

Type 2



Sausage-shaped but
lumpy

Type 3



Like a sausage but with
cracks on its surface

Type 4



Like a sausage or
snake, smooth and soft

Type 5



Soft blobs with clear-cut
edges (passed easily)

Type 6



Fluffy pieces with
ragged edges, a
mushy stool

Type 7



Watery, no solid pieces.
Entirely liquid.



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Bladder and Bowel Service
0300 125 5540



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