Most of us have heard that fiber is good for us. But why is it so good for us, and what foods should we eat to get more of it? Eating more fiber does not have to be limited to pouring Metamucil into water each morning. Fiber can be a delicious and healthy part of every meal!

There are two kinds of fiber, and both have many health benefits. Wondering what the best sources are? Fiber comes only from plants, so think of whole grains, beans, nuts, and fruits and vegetables. These are all fantastic sources of fiber.

- Getting adequate fiber can help promote healthy bowel function. When increasing intake of foods high in fiber, do so gradually. Add one serving of whole grains, beans or produce to a meal each day. Also make sure to drink enough fluid at meals and throughout the day.

- High-fiber foods increase satiety, which means they make you feel full for longer than a similar food that is low in fiber. A high-fiber diet can also contribute to more stable blood sugars throughout the day, which is important for people who are living with diabetes.

- Whole grains are high in fiber because they contain the bran part of the grain, which forms the exterior layer. Refined grains are stripped of the bran layer, and so are very low in fiber. They are also lower in some nutrients, which occur naturally in the bran. Try to make at least ½ your grains whole grains.
The Benefits of Eating More Dietary Fiber

Dietary fiber is good for you in many ways:
- Fiber lowers both total and LDL (the “bad”) cholesterol, which helps reduce your risk of heart disease.
- Fiber regulates blood sugar, which is great for people who have diabetes and also great for reducing the risk of diabetes and metabolic syndrome.
- Fiber helps provide a feeling of fullness without providing a lot of calories. This is really helpful for anyone trying to lose weight.
- Fiber helps keep bowel movements regular, and can prevent and treat constipation, hemorrhoids, and diverticulosis.
- Fiber may also reduce the risk of colon cancer.

Easy Ideas for Adding Fiber to Your Meals

Breakfast
- Choose whole grain cereals such as bran flakes, Cheerios, or oatmeal.
- Add fruit like berries (fresh or frozen), raisins, or sliced peaches to your cereal, or as a side to your eggs.
- Make your toast from a whole grain bread option like whole wheat or rye.
- Add veggies like spinach, mushrooms, and tomatoes to scrambled eggs and omelets.

Lunch
- Add a piece of fruit to your lunch every day.
- Go beyond lettuce and tomatoes on your sandwiches. Add cucumbers, radish slices, or bell pepper slices.
- Use hummus or a bean spread as the main protein in a sandwich.
- Try a seedy whole grain bread for your sandwiches or a whole wheat tortilla or pita bread.
- Have a cup of vegetable soup as part of your lunch, or make a large bowl of vegetable and bean soup your whole lunch!

Dinner
- Start dinner with a green salad or veggie soup.
- Use fruits like plums, pineapple or mango in sauces for pork or fish.
- Try a whole grain as a side dish.
- Go vegetarian once a week and focus on beans as a main protein source.

Fiber is found only in PLANTS:
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Legumes
- Whole Grains
Cooking with Whole Grains

Refined grains are everywhere and easy to eat too much of. But sampling some new kinds of whole grains is well worth the effort. Just like beans, whole grains are inexpensive and a great source of fiber, and each type boasts a unique flavor and texture. Here are a few tips on cooking with whole grains:

1. Grains can vary in cooking time depending on the age of the grain, the variety, and the pan you’re using. Start by following the package directions if you buy them boxed or bagged. If, when cooking, the water is completely soaked up but the grain is not tender to your liking, just add more water and continue cooking.

2. Cook whole grains in larger batches to save time. Grains keep 3-4 days in the refrigerator and take just minutes to warm up with a little added water or broth. Use them in a new recipe later on in the week.

3. There are also many quick-cooking grains available, even 90-second brown rice. These grains have been pre-cooked so you only need to cook them briefly or simply warm them through in the microwave. You do pay more for this convenience however.

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<th>Grain Cooking Guide</th>
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<td>Quick-cooking Barley</td>
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<td>Quinoa</td>
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Bean Basics

Cooking with dried beans does not need to be difficult! Dried beans are a very inexpensive, easy-to-store source of protein and fiber, and a great addition to many dishes. The following simple directions should make you feel more confident about using dried beans.

**Small Beans**
Green and yellow split peas, black-eyed peas, mung beans, adzuki beans, brown and red lentils. *Cook 1 cup of beans with 3-4 cups of water for 45-50 minutes (no soaking required).*

**Large Beans**
Includes garbanzo, pinto, black, navy, great northern, cannellini, and lima beans. *Cook as directed below:*

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**Sort ‘em!**

Rinse beans and remove any stones or debris.

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**One cup of dried beans usually yields 2½ to 3 cups of cooked beans**

**Overnight Soak:** In a large bowl, soak 1 cup beans in a large volume of water.

**OR**

**Quick Soak:** In a large pot, soak 1 cup of dry beans with 5 cups cold water. Bring to a boil for 1 minute. Turn off heat, cover and let soak for at least 1 hour.

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**Stovetop:** After draining, cover beans with 3 times their volume of water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 1 - 1 ¼ hours, depending on the type of bean (start checking for tenderness after 45 minutes). When tender, drain and use in your recipe of choice.

**OR**

**Crock Pot:** Place soaked and drained beans into a crock pot covered with 3 inches of fresh water. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until tender. Drain and use in your recipe of choice.

Created by Chicken Soup Brigade—Seattle, WA through a grant from AARP Foundation
Bruschetta with Broccoli Raab and Ricotta Cheese (Serves 2)
Adapted from Fresh Food Fast, by Peter Berley and Melissa Clark

- 1 bunch of broccoli raab, trimmed and cut to 1-inch lengths
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup golden raisins
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 4 thick slices of a whole grain, hard-crust bread
- 1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- 2 tablespoons grated parmesan for garnish
- Small amount of salt to taste

1. In a large skillet on medium high heat, warm the oil. Add broccoli raab and sauté about 3-5 minutes, until vibrant green.
2. Add garlic, raisins, and red pepper flakes.
3. Season with ¼ teaspoon salt, and then add additional pinches slowly until it reaches your preferred taste.
4. While broccoli is cooking, toast the bread slices.
5. Once broccoli raab is fork-tender, it is finished cooking.
6. Pile bread with 1/4 cup ricotta cheese, then the broccoli raab mixture.
7. Garnish with 2 teaspoons parmesan cheese.

If you can’t find broccoli raab, or it ends up a little overpriced, you can easily substitute broccolini, or even broccoli. Broccoli raab and broccolini have a delicate, sweeter flavor than broccoli.

Don’t be fooled by bread that says “multigrain”. Bread should say “whole grain” and the first ingredient should be a whole grain on the nutrition facts label. “Multigrain” just means its made with several kinds of grain, not necessarily whole grains.
Moroccan Spiced Veggies with Couscous (Serves 4)

- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ small eggplant, chopped
- 1 medium carrot, peeled and cut into 1-inch rounds
- 1 cup cauliflower, chopped
- 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp cumin
- 2 tsp ginger, grated OR 1/2 tsp dried ginger
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅔ of a 6 oz can tomato paste
- ½ cup water (or more if needed)
- 15 oz can garbanzo beans (chickpeas), drained and rinsed
- ½ cup raisins
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Cooked couscous or rice
- ½ cup pistachios, chopped (optional)

1. Heat oil in pan and add cauliflower, eggplant, carrot, garlic, cumin, ginger, cinnamon and salt.
2. Cook for about 3 minutes.
3. Add tomato paste and water and stir to combine.
4. Add garbanzos, raisins, lemon juice and a little more water if the mixture is too dry. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook until the carrot is tender (about 5-10 minutes).
5. Serve atop cooked couscous or rice topped with pistachios (if using).

Couscous Cooking Directions
Yield: 2 cups cooked couscous

Boil 1 cup water. Stir in ¾ cup of whole wheat couscous, remove from heat, and let stand 5 minutes, covered. Fluff with fork and serve.

Picture by Luca Nebuloni @ Flickr.com
Simple Vegetable Curry
(Serves 4)

- 1 cup brown rice
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 1 sweet potato, cubed
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- ½ onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons curry powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon coriander (optional)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 can garbanzo beans, rinsed
- 10 oz. spinach (may use frozen)
- 1 can lite coconut milk
- 1 15 oz low sodium diced tomatoes

1. Cook brown rice according to package directions. While cooking, heat oil in pan.
2. Add potato, bell pepper, carrots, and onion. Saute until onion begins to soften.
3. Add garlic and spices and sauté two more minutes.
4. Add beans, spinach, tomatoes and coconut milk and cover. Simmer on medium low heat for approximately 20 minutes, or until all vegetables are softened.
5. Serve over rice.

Zucchini
Eggplant
Cubed squash
Bok choy
Overnight Oats (Serves 1)

- ½ cup oats (old-fashioned)
- 1 tablespoon chopped nuts and seeds (try almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, pecans or hazelnuts)
- 1 tablespoon dried fruit such as dates, dried cranberries, raisins, chopped apricots, currants, chopped apple, shredded coconut, etc.
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¾ cup milk, milk alternative, or water (or enough to just cover oats)
- 1 apple, diced (optional, but worth the little bit of work)

1. In a large bowl, combine rolled oats with the mixture of chopped nuts and seeds of your choice.
2. Add nuts/seeds, dried fruit, brown sugar and cinnamon. Store in an air-tight container as you would dried cereal or granola.

3. To have breakfast ready in the morning, put portion of oat mixture into bowl and pour enough milk to completely cover. Cover and place in refrigerator overnight.
4. Before serving, add the apple (if using). You can also top with fresh berries or other seasonal fresh fruit.

- Raspberries, blueberries, peaches
- Apples, pears
- Apples, pears, or just dried fruit
- Strawberries
Roasted Veggies (Serves 4)
*Recipe by Chicken Soup Brigade
Executive Chef, Wendy Northcutt*

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons grainy mustard (or any mustard)
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest OR 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 large sprig fresh thyme (1 - 1 ½ teaspoons) OR ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4-6 small potatoes—red-skinned, or Yukon gold, quartered

1. Combine first six ingredients in large roasting pan and mix well.
2. Add veggies and toss to thoroughly coat them with the seasoning.
3. Roast uncovered at 400 degrees for 30-45 minutes or until the veggies are slightly browned and crunchy.

Flexi-Bean Burritos (Serves 4)
*Use the beans as a base and add your favorite burrito toppings.*

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ cup finely chopped onion
- 2 cups cooked beans of your choice (or canned, rinsed)
- ½ cup vegetable stock
- 1 fresh jalapeno pepper, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- Ground black pepper to taste
- 4 whole-wheat tortillas

1. Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat, and cook the onion until slightly softened.
2. Mix in the beans, stock, jalapeno, garlic, and lime juice.
3. Season with pepper to taste, and continue cooking until warmed through.
4. Wrap the mixture in the tortillas to serve.

To spice this up, add in the guacamole or salsa recipe from Week 1, “The Pressure’s On”
Popcorn Variations (Serves 1)

Basic recipe: Add about ¼ cup popcorn kernels to a small paper bag lunch bag. Fold top over twice in accordion fashion. Place upright in the middle of your microwave. Microwave about 2 minutes, or until popping begins to slow. Do not over-microwave popcorn as it can burn and taste charred. Enjoy a crunchy, high-fiber treat!

To add some tasty flavors to the crunch, try tossing a few toppings into your bag. Make sure to shake well before popping. Try the following options:

- ½ teaspoon canola or vegetable oil, with a sprinkling of cinnamon, cocoa and sugar
- ½ teaspoon canola oil, dash of chili powder and salt. Add a squeeze of lime juice on top when done popping
- ½ teaspoon olive oil, sprinkle with a dusting of parmesan cheese after popping
- ⅛ cup nutritional yeast (add to popcorn after popping).
Tuscan Roasted Chicken and Vegetables (Serves 2)

- 3 roma tomatoes, diced
- 1 medium zucchini, cubed into bite size
- ½ bulb fennel, thinly sliced
- 1 ½ tablespoons oil, divided
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- ½ tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 chicken breasts, skinless, bone-in (about 1 ¼ pounds)
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tablespoon fresh chopped rosemary leaves or 1 teaspoon dried

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
2. To slice the fennel, first wash the outside. Cut the green leafy fronds and keep the bottom white bulb and short nubs of the stalk on top.
3. Put all the vegetables into a large baking pan. Toss them with 2 tablespoons oil and ¼ teaspoon salt. Arrange the chicken pieces in the pan with the vegetables.
4. In a small bowl combine 1 tablespoon of oil, ¼ teaspoon salt, the garlic, and lemon zest and lemon juice.
5. Rub the mixture into the chicken in the pan. Season with a little black pepper.
6. Roast for 30 minutes at 375 degrees, then give the vegetables a stir and add the rosemary.
7. Cook an additional 20 minutes more or until the chicken is done and the vegetable are tender and beginning to brown.

Carrots, potatoes, parsnips, rutabagas, or Brussels sprouts

Photo by Alice Hendrix at flickr.com
### BASE INGREDIENTS:
- \(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{3}{4}\) lb MEAT (optional)
- 2 cups chopped VEGGIES
- \(\frac{1}{4} - \frac{1}{2}\) cup chopped onion
- 1-2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- PEPPER
- \(\frac{1}{2}\) teaspoon salt
- \(\frac{1}{2}\) cup LIQUID
- 2—14.5 oz cans low-sodium BEANS, rinsed and drained OR 3 cups cooked beans that were dried
- 1—14.5 oz can diced tomatoes, undrained, no-salt-added
- 1—8 oz can tomato sauce
- 1 ½ - 2 tablespoons chili powder
- \(\frac{1}{2}\) teaspoon DRIED HERB
- 1 oz unsweetened chocolate or 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa (optional)
- Optional toppings—sour cream, shredded cheese, sliced jalapeno peppers, guacamole

### WHAT TO DO:
1. In a large pot, heat vegetable oil and cook your MEAT choice, VEGGIES, and onion until the meat is browned and the veggies are tender.
2. Stir in BEANS, undrained tomatoes, tomato sauce, LIQUID, chili powder, DRIED HERBS, PEPPER, salt, and chocolate (if using). Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes for ground meat or 60 minutes for cubed meat. Stir occasionally.
3. Serve with optional toppings of your choice.

### YOU CHOOSE:
- **MEAT** (optional)
  - Ground beef, pork, or turkey
  - Beef shoulder top blade steak (flat-iron), cut into cubes
  - Pork shoulder, cut into cubes
  - Beef stew meat
  - Chicken thighs or breast, boneless, cut into pieces
  - Lamb, cut into cubes
- **BEANS**
  - Black
  - Cannellini (white)
  - Garbanzo (chickpeas)
  - Pinto
  - Red kidney
  - Lentils
- **VEGGIES**
  - Garlic
  - Carrots
  - Celery
  - Potatoes
  - Corn
  - Mushrooms
  - Bell peppers
  - Butternut squash
  - Black olives
  - Sweet potatoes
- **LIQUID**
  - Apple juice
  - Beef broth
  - Chicken broth
  - Veggie broth
  - Beer
  - Water
- **PEPPER**
  - 1/4 tsp black pepper
  - 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
  - 1/4 tsp crushed red pepper
  - 1 tablespoon finely chopped chipotle chile peppers in adobo sauce
  - 1 small can of green chilies
- **DRIED HERBS**
  - Basil
  - Cumin
  - Marjoram
  - Oregano
  - Thyme
  - Coriander
  - Tarragon

### CROCK POT INSTRUCTIONS:
Cook MEAT, VEGGIES, and garlic as described in step 1 above. In a 4 to 5 quart slow cooker combine the meat mixture, BEANS, tomatoes, tomato sauce, \(\frac{1}{2}\) cup LIQUID, chili powder, DRIED HERB, PEPPER, and chocolate (if using). Cover and cook on low heat for 8 to 10 hours or on high heat for 4 to 5 hours. Serve with optional toppings.
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