

Monthly Health Challenge™

# Feast on Fiber



**CHALLENGE**  
Eat more fiber-rich foods to improve your health

## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Feast on Fiber."
2. Plan out your meals for a day or a week at a time, and include foods high in fiber.
3. Keep up this habit for a lifetime of good health.



**W**hen Michigan resident Bree Maloney went to work at a desk job, she usually packed a lunch or went out to eat.<sup>1</sup> And even though her choices were relatively healthy, her stomach didn't seem to agree. She felt bloated. She was tired most of the time. And she was gaining weight.

Bree wasn't always chowing down on fast food, soft drinks, and sugary snacks like the typical American office worker. But there was one specific nutrient she was missing. Fiber.

"I decided to ditch the processed junk," says Bree. "I started incorporating more soups, beans, roasted veggies, fruits, and salads into my workplace diet. And I noticed an enormous difference. I had more energy, slept better, felt lighter, and more importantly, I had not as much belly bloat."

How much fiber do you eat in a day? If you don't know, you're not alone. But if your diet looks anything like typical fast-food fare, you're probably not getting enough. Fortunately, a few changes to your diet can fix that. Take the month-long health challenge and *Feast on Fiber* to improve your health.

### How Much Fiber Do You Need?

Fiber is only found in plant-based foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and legumes. And it's likely you need to eat more of it. The American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends:

1. Women: 25 grams of fiber per day
2. Men: 38 grams of fiber per day

### How much do you know about fiber? Take the quiz to find out

- |    | T                        | F                        |  |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The average adult in the U.S. only eats 15 to 18 grams of fiber per day. <sup>3</sup>  |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | For best health, women should eat 25 grams of fiber per day. Men should get 38 grams of fiber per day. <sup>4</sup>                                      |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fiber is only found in plant-based foods.  |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Eating a lot of fiber may help reduce the risk for stroke, high cholesterol, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. <sup>5</sup> |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | One cup of split peas has four times as much fiber (16 grams) as one cup of oatmeal.   |



How did you do? If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, you could benefit from learning more about the health benefits of fiber. If you don't know how much fiber you eat in a day, read food labels, and keep track. Once you know where you are, simple changes to your diet can help you get more fiber and improve your health.

*Answers. 1. True. 2. True. 3. True. 4. True. 5. True.*

## Health Benefits of Fiber

If you think the classic childhood lecture, "Eat your fruits and vegetables," was just a ploy to get you to follow the rules, think again. Foods high in fiber are good for your health in many ways and help prevent disease. (It's OK. Call your mom, and tell her she was right.) Research shows that eating a fiber-rich diet can help:<sup>2</sup>

- ✓ Reduce the risk for heart disease
- ✓ Prevent stroke
- ✓ Lower blood pressure
- ✓ Improve absorption of nutrients from food
- ✓ Control or prevent diabetes
- ✓ Support weight loss and weight management
- ✓ Improve digestion
- ✓ Control cholesterol levels
- ✓ Strengthen the immune system
- ✓ Prevent certain types of cancer

10 simple ways to increase fiber in your diet  
[tinyurl.com/y9yvgbpg](http://tinyurl.com/y9yvgbpg)



## Easy Ways to Eat More Fiber

It's easy to say you're going to eat more fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and legumes. But if you're not eating enough fiber right now, what can you do to change your eating habits? Here are some easy ways to eat more fiber:



- Choose whole-grain breads and cereals** instead of white bread and sugary cereals.
- Leave the skin on potatoes, apples, and carrots.** The outer layer is highest in fiber.
- Go nuts.** Snack on a handful of nuts, seeds, or raw vegetables instead of cookies or chips.
- Add cooked beans and peas** to pasta, soups, stews, casseroles, and salads.
- Choose an orange or grapefruit** instead of juice for breakfast. (Juice doesn't have a lot of fiber.)
- Eat fresh or dried fruit** for desserts or snacks.
- Make a smoothie with fresh fruit** and toss in high-fiber foods like flaxseed, avocado, and leafy greens.
- Choose high-fiber grains** like brown rice, bulgur, quinoa, and couscous instead of white rice and white flour.
- Puree vegetables** and add to sauces and stews.
- Replace white rice** with chopped cauliflower (cooked).
- Make pancakes with buckwheat flour** instead of white flour or a packaged mix.
- Add raw sprouts** to sandwiches and salads.
- Sneak in flaxseed meal** with oats, smoothies, yogurt, and baked goods.
- Drink plenty of water.** The more fiber you eat, the more water your digestive system needs to break down food. If you don't, you could end up with constipation.
- Keep a food log and read food labels** to track how much fiber you're eating per day. Aim to eat 25 to 30 grams of fiber. Keeping track will remind you to choose food high in fiber.

## Eat These High-Fiber Foods

If you want to eat more fiber to improve your diet and your health, put these fiber-rich foods on your menu:



Food	Fiber (per cup)	Food	Fiber (per cup)
Split peas	16.3g	Bran Flakes	7g
Lentils	15.6g	Raspberries	8g
Black Beans	15g	Blackberries	7.6g
Lima Beans	13.2g	Avocados	6.7g
Peas	8.8g	Broccoli	5.1g

### Get Used to Eating More Fiber, One Day at a Time

If you're not getting enough fiber in your diet now, start by eating more fiber than you did yesterday. Then gradually eat a little more fiber each day. And keep track of how you feel. When Bree Maloney, started eating 25 to 30 grams of fiber a day, she felt a lot better, less tired, and less bloated. Like Bree says, "Get out there and get your diet and your mind focused on fiber, fiber, fiber."

### Fast food, soft drinks, and sugary snacks don't offer much in terms of fiber.

For example:

- A chocolate chip cookie contains 2 grams of fiber.
- A slice of white bread: 1 gram of fiber.
- Even a typical cheeseburger only contains 2 grams of fiber.
- And some foods like meat, fish, and dairy products don't contain any fiber.



### References

1. Maloney, B. (2017). How fiber changed my life. LinkedIn. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y7fgbqcw>
2. Anderson, J.W., et al. (2009). Health benefits of dietary fiber. *Nutrition Reviews*, 67(4):188-205. doi: 10.1111/j.1753-4887.2009.00189.x
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). Recent findings on dietary intake. National Center for Health Statistics. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y94ocnql>
4. Larson, H. (2017). Easy ways to boost fiber in your daily diet. American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. From: <https://tinyurl.com/qhr6heu>
5. Greger, M. (2017). Fiber. [NutritionFacts.org](https://nutritionfacts.org). From: <https://nutritionfacts.org/topics/fiber>





# Feast on Fiber

## CHALLENGE

Eat more fiber-rich foods to improve your health

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Plan out your meals for a day or a week at a time, and include foods high in fiber.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to make eating more fiber a regular part of your diet.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, each week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: _____							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I feasted on fiber

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



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