

Modifying fibre in your diet

Information for patients

Name _____

Dietitian _____

This leaflet should be given to you by a
healthcare professional

This leaflet is for people advised to modify the fibre in their diet in order to manage symptoms.

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre (also known as roughage) is the part of food that cannot be easily digested (broken down) and therefore is not absorbed by our body. Dietary fibre continues its journey from the small bowel into the large bowel (colon), and once it gets there, it is either broken down by the bacteria that live in the colon or pooped out (faeces).

Fibre is present in all plant-based foods, i.e., fruit, vegetables, pulses (beans, lentils and peas), nuts, seeds, oats and wholemeal (brown) cereal products.

Types of fibre in the diet

There are two types of dietary fibre: soluble and insoluble. Changing the type of fibre in your diet may help improve symptoms, and in general, a low fibre diet has more soluble than insoluble fibre.

Soluble fibre: Absorbs (holds onto) water to become a gel like substance that is broken down by bacteria in the gut. This type of fibre can help with both diarrhoea and constipation (hard poo that is difficult to get out).

Foods rich in soluble fibre include:

- Oats (should be cooked)
- Pulses; beans, peas and lentils (should be well cooked)
- Fruit without peel or skin
- Some vegetables such as parsnips, carrots, aubergine, spinach, squash, baked sweet potato, turnips, broccoli and courgette.

Insoluble fibre: Does not dissolve in water, but it absorbs water like a sponge and swells up. It is not broken down by our digestive processes and it is excreted in the stools. This type of fibre can help with symptoms of constipation.

Foods rich in insoluble fibre include:

- Wholegrain/wholemeal bread
- Wholegrain Cereals (e.g. Weetabix, Shreddies, All bran)
- Wholegrain Rice and pasta
- Skins of vegetables, pulses and some fruits
- Citrus fruit pith
- Pips
- Seeds and nuts
- Stringy vegetables (e.g. Green beans, celery, leeks)
- Muesli

Average daily fibre intake

The recommended UK fibre intake is 30g per day.

What is the advice for low fibre?

A low fibre diet aims to reduce your fibre intake to less than 10g per day. Foods that are high fibre have over 6g per 100g and should not be eaten on a low fibre diet.

Who needs a time of reduced fibre?

Some people require a reduced fibre diet for a short amount of time:

- This may be if you have recently had pelvic radiotherapy or if you had chemotherapy or immunotherapy induced diarrhoea (ref. www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/treatment/cancer-drugs/side-effects/diarrhoea-constipation).

- If you are experiencing a flare of Crohn's disease or colitis you may also benefit from a period of following a reduced fibre diet.
- You will also require a period of low fibre diet if you have a newly made ileostomy.
- If you have IBS, your GP or dietitian may also ask you to reduce high fibre foods for a short time.
- You may also need a period of low fibre diet if you are having a flare of diverticulitis.
- You may have been asked to follow a low fibre diet after bowel surgery. If you are unsure how long to continue following this diet, talk with your surgeon or gastroenterologist.

Following a reduced fibre diet is recommended to slow the movement of food through the digestive system (gut) and reduces the amount and number of poos you make.

Not only will this provide symptomatic relief, but it will also reduce the risk of dehydration (lack of fluid in the body) and loss of nutrients.

Some people may need to reduce their fibre intake for a longer period. For example, if you have a narrowed areas within the bowel, such as people with IBD who may have strictures in their bowel caused by inflammation or scar tissue (healed inflamed tissue).

Please see the following table of common foods which would be suitable on a modified fibre diet.

Food group: Bread, cereals, rice, pasta		
Food for low fibre diet	Foods contain medium amounts of soluble fibre	Food to limit (high insoluble and total fibre)
White bread & rolls, crumpets, scones, white pita, bread, white bagels White flour & white flour products e.g. biscuits, cream crackers, croissants Potatoes – no skin Refined breakfast cereals e.g. Cornflakes, Rice Krispies, Cocopops, Frosties White rice, pasta, noodles and couscous Rice cakes, plain crackers Chickpea/ corn/ potato and rice flours.	Oats/oatmeal (instant or cooked) Chia seeds Sourdough bread Rye bread	Wholemeal, granary, soft grain and brown bread Bread containing nuts, seeds, dried fruit Wholemeal flour, bran, wholegrain crispbreads Digestive & whole wheat biscuits. Flapjacks & cereal bars Wholegrain or bran cereals (or with any dried fruit or nuts) e.g. Weetabix, bran flakes, shredded wheat, muesli Brown rice, wholewheat pasta

Food group: Fruit		
Food for low fibre diet	Foods contain medium amounts of soluble fibre	Food to limit (high insoluble and total fibre)
Melon (no skin or seeds) Tinned mandarins, tinned grapefruit, tinned peaches (without pith) Fruit juice (clear and without pith e.g. apple juice) Certain fruit without skin (e.g. some high fibre fruit with the skin removed) Pureed, stewed or cooked fruit (without skin, pips or stones)	Banana Apple, no skin Cherries / seedless grapes Oranges (pips removed) Mango/papaya Peeled peaches, nectarine, plum Blueberries	Fruit with skin or pips e.g. pears, pineapple Dried fruit Fruit with small seeds (e.g. kiwi, figs, dates, pomegranate) Strawberries, raspberries, blackberries Juice with pulp

Food group: Vegetables		
Food for low fibre diet	Foods contain medium amounts of soluble fibre	Food to limit (high insoluble and total fibre)
Ensure vegetables are peeled (remove skins and seeds) and well-cooked where able: Potato and sweet potato, pumpkin, squash Root vegetables: carrots, parsnip, swede, turnip, beetroot aubergine courgette mushrooms cauliflower & broccoli florets (no stalks) Bell pepper with seeds removed Suitable salad vegetables: Tomato and cucumber with skins and seeds removed Well strained vegetable juice Tomato puree or paste	Ensure vegetables are peeled and well-cooked where able: Onion – cooked Spinach Canned diced tomato	Raw vegetables All vegetable skins, pips, seeds, stalks and peel Potato skins Salad leaves such as lettuce, rocket, watercress and spinach Bean sprouts Stringy vegetables (e.g. celery, broccoli stems, asparagus, runner beans, mange tout, cabbage, artichokes, celery, radish, peppers) Vegetables with tough skins (e.g. peas, sweetcorn)

Food group: Dairy foods		
Food for low fibre diet	Foods contain medium amounts of soluble fibre	Food to limit (high insoluble and total fibre)
All types of milk such as cow's, sheep's, goat's soya, oat, almond, rice Cream, crème fraiche, sour cream, fromage frais All plain types of cheese Butter, margarine, butter spreads Smooth yoghurt Ice cream, sorbets Custard	Desserts containing peeled or stewed fruit	Yoghurt containing fruit pieces and nuts/seeds Cheeses containing fruit pieces

Food group: Protein foods		
Food for low fibre diet	Foods contain medium amounts of soluble fibre	Food to limit (high insoluble and total fibre)
All types of meat, meat products, fish (fresh, frozen, tinned) Eggs Tofu Smooth pate Smooth Dahal	Smooth nut butters Hummus Small quantities of pureed pulses (beans, chickpeas, lentils) Sausages and burgers	Fish with edible bones e.g. tinned salmon, sardines or pilchards Nuts and seeds Crunchy nuts or seed butters All varieties of pulses such as lentils, chickpeas All varieties of beans such as baked beans, broad beans, cannellini, kidney, black, soya and borlotti beans Quorn

Food group: Desserts	
Food for low fibre diet	Food to limit (high insoluble and total fibre)
Plain cake or hot puddings (sponges & crumbles), ice cream, jelly, mousse Plain milk puddings (rice/semolina) Sugar, seedless jams and marmalade, honey, syrup, lemon curd Boiled sweets, plain toffee and chocolate (with no fruit or nuts) Spreads without seeds or skin (e.g. chocolate spread)	Cakes and desserts with fruit and nuts or wholemeal flour Coarse marmalade Jam with pips or skins Toffee or chocolate with fruit or nuts Popcorn Coconut Flapjacks and granolas (contain uncooked oats)

Food group: Miscellaneous	
Food for low fibre diet	Food to limit (high insoluble and total fibre)
'Cream of' soups e.g. cream of chicken, cream of mushroom, cream of tomato soups Tomato ketchup Pesto (no more than ½ a pot/jar) Soy sauce Plain gravy Sweet chili sauce Smooth mustard Brown sauce Barbeque sauce Worcester sauce Mayonnaise, salad cream Dried herbs Powdered spices Marmite, vegemite, Bovril Salt, pepper Sugar Crisps and tortilla chips Plain breadsticks Smooth guacamole	Soups with pieces such as minestrone or chunky vegetable soup Coleslaw Jams with seeds Chutneys Wholegrain mustard Stalks and leaves of fresh herbs Jams with seeds and marmalade with peel Salad dressing with wholegrain mustard Dips with whole vegetables (e.g. salsa, tzatziki)

Multivitamins

Following a reduced fibre diet will also mean that you are reducing the variety of fruit and vegetables in your diet. Therefore, we would recommend taking a daily A-Z multivitamin when following a low fibre diet. This will lower the risk of any micronutrient (vitamins and mineral) deficiencies.

Fibre reintroduction

We would recommend not to stay on a low fibre diet for longer than three months (unless advised by your doctor or dietitian).

Once broken down in your large intestine, it has been suggested that dietary fibres increase the beneficial (good) bacteria in your gut. This improves your immune system and helps regulate your gut functions.

Eating a range of dietary fibre can:

- Improve the diversity of your gut microbiota
- Reduce symptoms of constipation and lactose intolerance
- Enhance immunity
- Reduce inflammation in your gut

We would recommend starting by having fibre in one main meal of the day. If this is tolerated, introduce fibre into another main meal per day the following week.

You could try:

- Having a serving of higher fibre fruit or vegetable per day
- Introducing a serving of a higher fibre cereal
- Try to swap white bread/pasta/rice with wholemeal/wholegrain varieties
- Try to introduce a serving of pulses (beans or lentils) with a main meal
- Try to introduce vegetables in a blended form first to help improving tolerance to higher fibre foods

If you have any further queries about reintroducing fibre back into your diary, please discuss with your doctor or dietitian.

Notes

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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