

## Are You Getting Enough Fiber?

Many health experts advise people of all ages to eat dietary fiber. It may help prevent cancer, diabetes, heart disease, obesity and other health problems. Fiber isn't thought of as an essential nutrient in general. But, it's recommended that adults consume between 25 (women) to 38 (men) grams a day. Sadly, this is almost double what the average person actually eats.

Also, healthy toddlers and children should have only slightly lower amounts than what's suggested for adults each day. Ask your child's doctor about what's best.

### What is fiber?

Fiber is a complex carbohydrate that's found in plants. It has no calories because the body can't absorb it. This means low-fat, high-fiber foods are usually low in calories.

Fiber is divided into two categories. Each acts uniquely and gives different health benefits. Soluble fibers help lower cholesterol and regulate blood sugar. Insoluble fibers often are used to treat some bowel disorders. Nearly all foods with fiber have more insoluble than soluble fiber. In most cases, it's best to get fiber through your diet rather than with supplements.

### Which foods have insoluble fiber?

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Dried beans
- Wheat bran
- Seeds
- Popcorn
- Brown rice
- Whole-grain foods (breads, cereals, pastas)

### Which foods have soluble fiber?

- Fruits (apples, oranges, pears, peaches, grapes)
- Vegetables
- Seeds
- Oat bran
- Dried beans
- Barley
- Rye
- Prunes

Try not to increase your fiber too much over a short period of time. It may cause discomfort. You may experience bloating, cramping, diarrhea or gas. Add fiber gradually over several weeks. Talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian for more information on how to add fiber to your diet.

## Getting Fit, Staying Fit

Exercise can help you feel better, look better and maybe even live longer. But sometimes it's hard to get started. Getting fit doesn't have to mean spending hours at the gym or running laps until you drop. Even if you can only fit in 10 minutes here and 15 minutes there, remember every little bit counts.

### Benefits of Physical Activity

- Can help keep weight under control
- May help to improve blood cholesterol levels
- May help prevent or control high blood pressure
- Helps to prevent bone loss
- Increases muscle tone

- Boosts energy levels
- May help you manage stress and relieve tension

### Getting Started

- Talk with your doctor before beginning any exercise program
- Start slowly—don't overdo it
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after you exercise
- Ask a friend to exercise with you to help keep you motivated
- Try to make exercise a regular part of your daily routine

If you do something fun and interesting, you're more likely to stay with it. To help get you going, here are some examples of exercises and how many calories they burn. The following table lists the number of calories a 150-pound person burns performing these activities for 20 minutes.

Activity	Calories Burned
Bicycling (6 mph)	240
Swimming laps	240
Running (5.2 mph)	216
Playing basketball	192
Doing step aerobics	168
Hiking	144
Dancing	132
Playing golf (walking)	132
Painting the house	120
Washing the car	108
Walking (4.0 mph)	104
Gardening	98
Stretching	96
Playing golf (w/cart)	84
Bowling	72
Sleeping	15

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# Lowering Your Cholesterol

Knowing your blood cholesterol level, and taking steps to keep it in a healthy range, can help you improve your heart health. As always, be sure to talk with your doctor about diet and lifestyle changes that are right for you.

**Cut back on high-cholesterol foods.** Limiting cholesterol to less than 300 mg a day is important in reducing your risk of heart disease. Cholesterol is found in animal-based foods, such as whole-milk products, pork, beef and egg yolks.

**Limit dietary fat.** The American Heart Association recommends that no more than 30 percent of daily calories come from fat and only 10 percent from saturated fat. Saturated fat is found in whole-milk products such as butter, cheese and cream; meats, such as beef and pork; and certain plant oils, such as coconut and palm.

**Limit saturated fat.** Substitute saturated fats with monounsaturated or unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fats lower levels of LDL, the “bad cholesterol,” and increase HDL, the “good kind” that helps remove bad cholesterol from the arteries. Polyunsaturated fat includes plant oils, such as sunflower, soybean and corn; and fish, such as tuna, salmon and mackerel. Monounsaturated fats include olive and canola oils.

**Beware of trans fat.** Trans fat is added to margarine to give it the consistency of butter and may be as harmful to your arteries as saturated fat. The words “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” on a margarine’s label means it contains trans fat. There are currently brands of margarine that contain no trans fat—making it the healthiest choice.

**Fill up on fiber.** Fiber—found in foods such as fruits and vegetables, beans, oat bran and rice—can help lower cholesterol.

**Add some soy to your diet.** Research suggests that compounds found in soy may lower LDL cholesterol. The amount of soy needed to lower cholesterol is 25 grams a day. Soy protein is found in soy beans, tofu, tempeh and products made with soy flour.

**Stop smoking.** Smoking increases blood pressure, which damages blood vessels, increases blood cholesterol levels and leads to hardening of the arteries. Talk with your doctor about how smoking affects your health.

**Stay active and lose weight.** Exercise can keep your body fit and trim, and your heart strong. It also helps you lose weight. Excess weight can increase blood cholesterol, as well as your risk of high blood pressure and diabetes—two major risk factors for heart disease.

**Take charge of your emotions.** Research suggests that episodes of stress, depression, anxiety and anger release substances such as adrenaline—which converts stored body fat into fatty acids—increasing blood cholesterol. Relaxation is key to managing anxiety. It may help to talk with a counselor who can help you develop strategies to cope with stress or depression.



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# Achieving a Healthy Blood Pressure

If you're diagnosed with high blood pressure—or even pre-hypertension—it's important to do all you can to keep your blood pressure low and under control. You may not feel the symptoms of high blood pressure from day to day. But, it can take a serious toll on your health.

Unchecked high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure, kidney failure and other health conditions. The good news is there are steps that can help lower high blood pressure. That translates into better health today—and in the future.

**Lose weight, if needed.** Losing extra pounds can make a difference. For some people, weight loss may be all that's needed to lower blood pressure. For others, losing weight may reduce the amount of medicine needed to manage high blood pressure.

Take it one step at a time. Reduce fats as well as overall calories. Can't resist desserts? Take a half-portion. Adding fiber and vegetables to your diet will help you feel full. Talk with your doctor about ways to lose weight and stay healthy.

**Be physically active.** Exercise goes hand in hand with losing weight. Even if your weight is on target, you still need regular physical activity. Besides lowering your blood pressure, it can make you feel and look better. An exercise plan also can help reduce your risk of heart attack and other health concerns. Try biking, running or swimming. Walking also is excellent exercise. Remember to check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

**Choose plenty of fruits and vegetables.** Recent research has found that the DASH diet,

combined with low sodium intake, helps to lower blood pressure. This diet is based on 2,000 calories a day. It recommends 4-5 servings of vegetables as well as 4-5 servings of fruits daily. It also includes eating whole grain products and 2-3 servings of low fat dairy. You should limit fish, poultry or other meats to 2 or fewer 3-ounce servings each day.

**Choose foods low in salt and sodium.** Use less salt when you cook. And, don't add salt at the table. This might be a hard habit to break. Try sprinkling different spices on foods to add flavor. Once you break the salt habit, you'll find foods are tastier without it. Read nutrition labels for salt or sodium content. You may be surprised to see high levels in foods you'd never suspect as "salty."

**Limit your alcohol intake.** If you drink, limit your daily alcohol intake to no more than one drink for women or two drinks for men. Talk with your doctor about the effect of alcohol on your blood pressure. And, ask about possible interactions with your medicine.

**Take your medicine.** If your doctor has prescribed high blood pressure pills, take them as directed. Don't skip them just because you don't feel any symptoms. Pay attention to how your medicine makes you feel. If you have a side effect, such as dizziness, sleepiness or some other problem, don't stop taking your medicine. Be sure to tell your doctor about it right away. You may be directed to change your dosage. Or, a different medicine may be recommended.

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## Healthy Weight Loss

With the growing popularity of fad diets and quick weight loss gimmicks, one thing remains clear among most experts: A healthy diet combined with exercise is the key to losing weight and keeping it off.

**Healthy Diet.** When you're trying to lose weight, it's important to reduce the number of calories in your diet. You can do this by eating less fat and controlling your portion sizes. However, you shouldn't starve yourself or use fad diets. Talk with your doctor to find out how many calories you should be consuming every day. A healthy diet includes:

**Low amounts of fat.** Some fat in your diet is necessary for energy and vitamin absorption. However, no more than 30 percent of your total daily calories should come from fat. Be

aware of the types of fat you're eating, too. High levels of saturated fat, which mainly is found in animal and dairy sources, can lead to high blood cholesterol levels. This puts you at greater risk for heart disease and other health concerns. A healthier alternative is monounsaturated fat. This type is found in olives, olive oil, cashews and avocados. It actually has been shown to reduce the risk for heart disease.

**Plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products.** This is where most of your calories should come from. These low-fat foods provide vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates and other substances that are good for your health. Your diet also should be:

- High in fiber
- Low in cholesterol
- Low to moderate in sugars, salt and sodium

**Exercise** is an important component of any healthy weight loss plan. Try to include some moderate activity most days of the week. Walking, gardening, dancing, jogging and swimming are all great ways to keep moving.

Exercise reduces the risk of obesity, hypertension and heart disease. It also increases longevity, and reduces anxiety, depression and stress. With a regular exercise routine, most people start to see and feel results in about four to six weeks.

Before starting a weight loss routine, talk with your doctor—especially if you are age 40 or older, have a health condition or have been inactive for a while.

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## Take Charge of Your Health

Having control over your medical care can prevent stress, as well as mistakes that could affect your health. This doesn't mean you should diagnose yourself or change your medication dosage. It means it's a good idea to take an active role in managing your care.

Though you might have a doctor or pharmacist you trust, mistakes in health care delivery can happen. Here are some ways you can build more valuable, effective partnerships with your medical professionals:

- **Pay close attention to all medications you're taking.** Ten percent of hospital admissions in the United States occur because of problems with medications. It's very important that you carefully listen to and follow your doctor's instructions. Also, be sure to check with your pharmacist about interactions. Make sure to go over all the prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, herbal drugs and vitamins you are taking. And, remind your doctor about other drugs or supplements you're taking any time you get a new prescription.

- **Prepare for appointments with your doctor.** Going to the doctor can be nerve-racking. You may be worried about taking time away from work. Or, you may be anxious about the exam. Make a list of questions before you get to the office. This can help you feel less stressed out about the visit. It also can help your doctor address your concerns. During the appointment, write down instructions and information to refer to at home.
- **Stay organized.** Remembering when your last vaccinations were or what month you had your last flu shot can be tricky. This can be even more difficult if you're keeping track for other family members, too. It helps to create an immunization chart and note the dates on which they were given.
- **Ask questions.** Never be afraid to ask more questions if you're not sure about recommended care. You may even wish to seek a second opinion. Make sure you understand the training and qualifications of your doctors, and the ratings and experience of the hospitals you use.

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