



Royal Surrey
County Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Increasing fibre intake on a gluten free diet

Nutrition & Dietetics Department

Patient information leaflet

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre (also known as roughage) is the part of plants that cannot be easily digested. Some of it passes through the body without being absorbed. Fibre absorbs fluid as it moves through your bowel. This adds weight to your stools and forms a soft bulk. This makes it easier for you to go to the toilet.

Many people in the UK do not eat enough fibre. Eating enough fibre whilst following a gluten-free diet can be difficult. Many commercially produced gluten free products are lower in fibre than the gluten containing varieties.

Increasing the amount of fibre in your diet may help to reduce:

- constipation
- haemorrhoids (piles)
- the risk of developing diverticular disease
- cholesterol levels and risk of coronary heart disease
- the risk of bowel cancer

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for you if you follow a gluten free diet and:

- suffer from constipation
- suffer from haemorrhoids (piles)
- have been diagnosed with diverticular disease (but are not having a flare)
- have high cholesterol
- have a family history of bowel cancer

How do I introduce more fibre into my diet?

- Aim to increase the fibre in your diet gradually (over several weeks). You may have more 'wind' and bloating than usual to start with. This should settle down as your body gets used to the extra fibre.
- Try to add one extra fibrous food into your diet each day – until you start producing softer stools every day or every other day
- You may find you suffer with ongoing wind or bloating, and even some discomfort. If this happens, you should reduce the amount of high fibre food for a week or so until your symptoms settle. Then start to increase the fibre again by adding one food at a time.
- Try to avoid processed and pre-prepared foods. These have a lower fibre content than fresh alternatives.
- Aim for at least 5 portions of fruit and/or vegetables every day. Choose a variety of colours and spread them throughout the day. Dried fruit counts as one of your '5-a-day' and is very high in fibre.
- Golden linseeds are a useful fibre to add into your diet. You should start with 1 tablespoon each day. They can be added to gluten free porridge, yoghurt, smoothies or soups. After one week, you could increase to 2 tablespoons golden linseeds if necessary. Ensure that an extra 125mls fluid is taken with every tablespoon of the golden linseeds. You might find that you prefer them ground, rather than whole seeds, especially if you have diverticular disease.
- Checking food labels can be helpful to check fibre content of pre-packaged food items. On the nutritional labelling 6g (or more) fibre per 100g means the food is high in fibre. Foods containing 3g fibre per 100g are considered a source of fibre.

What else do I need to do to help my bowels?

- Fibre absorbs fluid as it passes through the body. It is therefore important to drink plenty throughout the day to prevent constipation. Aim for 8-10 glasses every day. This is equal to 2 litres (4 pints) of fluid e.g. tea, coffee, fruit juice, milk, squash, water. Even if you drink plenty already, you may need to have more if you are increasing your fibre intake.
- Be more active! Movement and gravity will help your digestion. Whatever your age, there's strong scientific evidence that being physically active can help you lead a healthier and even happier life. People who do regular activity have a lower risk of many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and some cancers, including colon cancer. Exercise increases mood and reduces anxiety, which can affect your bowels. Start with just gentle walking if you have not exercised before. If you have chronic medical conditions, always check with your GP before starting a new exercise programme.
- Eat regular meals. Eating at regular intervals throughout the day and at similar times on most days, should allow your digestion to fall into a pattern. This will help establish a regular bowel habit.
- Keep to a routine (a place and time of day) when you're able to spend time on the toilet. It might be useful to get up a little earlier to allow you more time in the morning. Always have breakfast to help your bowels move in the morning.
- Respond to your bowel's natural pattern: when you feel the urge, don't delay going!
- Try resting your feet on a low stool, or use a Squatty Potty® (www.squattypotty.co.uk/) while going to the toilet, so that your knees are above your hips; this can make passing stools easier.
- The medication you're taking could be causing constipation; your GP may be able to prescribe an alternative. Do not stop taking medication without first consulting your GP
- Your GP may prescribe an oral laxative if diet and lifestyle changes don't help.

How much fibre do I need to eat every day?

It is recommended that healthy adults have 18-30g fibre each day. Use the table below to calculate your daily intake, and to increase it if necessary.

Food	Portion size	Fibre content (g)
Fruit		
Banana	1 medium (100g)	2.0
Orange	1 medium (100g)	2.5
Apple (with skin)	1 medium (100g)	2.0
Pear (with skin)	1 medium (150g)	2.5
Strawberry	5 fruits (60g)	0.5
Raisins	1 tablespoon (30g)	0.5
Dried apricots	5 fruits (40g)	3.0
Vegetables		
Carrots (cooked)	3 tablespoons (60g)	1.5
Broccoli (cooked)	3 tablespoons (85g)	2.0
Cauliflower (cooked)	3 tablespoons (90g)	1.5
Green beans (cooked)	3 tablespoons (90g)	3.5
Sweetcorn	3 tablespoons (85g)	2.0
Peas (fresh or frozen)	3 tablespoons (70g)	3.0
Tomato	6 cherry tomatoes (90g)	1.0
Peppers (raw)	Half of large pepper (80g)	1.0
Avocado pear	Half of 1 fruit	2.5

Food	Portion size	Fibre content (g)
Starchy foods		
Gluten free bread – brown	1 medium slice (large loaf)	4.0
Gluten free bread – seeded	1 medium slice (large loaf)	3.0 – 6.0 (depending on brand)
Gluten free bread – white, fortified	1 medium slice (large loaf)	3.5
Gluten free bread – brown roll	1 medium roll	4.5
Gluten free bread – white pitta	1 large	3.5
Gluten free – brown wrap	1 large	4.5
Gluten free oat cakes	2 biscuits	1.0
Gluten free cream crackers	5 biscuits	2.5
Nutri Brex® (sorghum)	3 biscuits	6.8
Gluten free fibre flakes	Small bowl (30g)	2.7
Gluten free muesli	Medium bowl (50g)	3.5
Gluten free granola	Medium bowl (50g)	3.0
Gluten free (pure) porridge	Medium bowl (40g oats)	3.0
Jacket potato	1 medium (with skin)	5.0
Gluten free pasta (cooked)	Medium portion (220g)	1.5
Gluten free lentil pasta (cooked)	Medium portion (220g)	6.0
Rice – white (boiled)	3 tablespoons (180g)	0.5
Rice – brown (boiled)	3 tablespoons (180g)	1.0
Brown rice noodles	Medium portion (125g)	2.0
Fruit & nut bars	45g bar	2.5 – 4.5 (depending on brand)

Food	Portion size	Fibre content (g)
Pulses and nuts		
Quinoa (cooked)	Medium portion (100g)	4.0
Baked beans	1 small can (205g)	7.6
Lentils	1 heaped tablespoon	1.5
Chickpeas	1 heaped tablespoon	1.5
Red kidney beans	1 heaped tablespoon	2.0
Nuts	2 tablespoons	1.0
Seeds (pumpkin, sunflower)	1 dessertspoon	1.0
Golden linseeds	1 heaped tablespoon	3.5
Chia seeds	1 heaped tablespoon	4
Quorn® mince	75g	4.0
Quorn® pieces	75g	5.3

What should I eat for breakfast?

- Cereals labelled 'high fibre' e.g. Doves Farm® Fibre Flakes, Nutri Bex®, Natures Store® Multigrain High Fibre Flakes, Eat Natural® Toasted Muesli Buckwheat
- Gluten free (pure) porridge
- Chopped fresh or dried fruit added to your gluten free cereal or porridge
- Gluten free cereals that contain dried fruit or nuts e.g. granola, muesli
- Wholemeal, high fibre, fortified white or seeded/granary gluten free bread instead of white bread
- Gluten free high fibre toast with
 - crunchy peanut butter
 - marmalade with peel
 - grilled tomatoes
 - mushrooms

- Natural yoghurt with fresh fruit, nuts and/or seeds
- Piece of fruit
- Small glass of fruit juice (with bits for extra fibre) with a meal once each day only
- Golden linseeds added to your gluten free porridge before cooking

How can I add fibre to my main meal?

- Include two portions of vegetables or a large salad with your main meal every day. See the NHS Livewell website for a guide to portion sizes; www.nhs.uk/Livewell/5ADAY/Pages/Portionsizes.aspx
- Add extra vegetables, lentils or pulses to casseroles, stews or minced meat
- Swap some meat for beans, lentils, pulses or Quorn®
- Use lentil pasta, brown rice noodles or brown rice instead of white gluten free pasta
- Opt for stir fries which contain lots of vegetables
- Add extra toppings to ready-made gluten free pizzas e.g. sweetcorn, peppers, mushrooms, artichokes
- Choose vegetarian alternatives e.g. vegetable curries, gluten free lasagne
- Add vegetables to gluten free macaroni cheese and gluten free pasta dishes e.g. spinach, sweetcorn
- Opt for tomato pasta sauces made with extra vegetables and serve with a side salad
- Add sunflower and pumpkin seeds to salads
- Have potatoes boiled, baked or mashed in their skins instead of peeling them

What should I eat for a snack meal?

- Gluten free soup with a gluten free high fibre roll.
Lentil or vegetable soup options are ideal
- Add golden linseeds to soup
- High fibre gluten free toast with;
 - Baked beans
 - Grilled tomatoes
 - Mushrooms
- Baked potato (including skin) with;
 - baked beans
 - cheese and tomato
 - tuna and sweetcorn
 - chilli con-carne
 - coleslaw
- Sandwiches made with gluten free high fibre bread and;
 - tuna and cucumber
 - bacon, lettuce and tomato
 - tuna and sweetcorn
 - egg and watercress
 - cheese and tomato
 - cold meat and lettuce
- Gluten free oat cakes with cheese, or cold meat and salad
- Salad with cold meat, fish or egg e.g. Sliced chicken or turkey breast, smoked mackerel, hard boiled egg and added seeds or nuts
- Brown rice or quinoa salad

What should I eat for dessert?

Fruit is ideal and can be served in many ways:

- Chopped with natural yoghurt
- Cooked or stewed
- Made into a fruit salad
- Added to jelly
- As a crumble made with gluten free flour, oats and nuts
- Added to a gluten free cheesecake
- Included in pavlova

TIP: If you are trying to lose weight, limit high calorie options and choose the low fat desserts more often.

What snacks are high in fibre?

- All fruit: tinned, fresh and dried
- Fruit smoothies
- Gluten free cereal bars containing dried fruit, nuts and oats
- Gluten free flapjacks, especially with added dried fruit
- Gluten free biscuits containing oats e.g. gluten free Hob Nobs®, gluten free digestives
- Gluten free fruit cake
- Nuts and seeds
- Popcorn
- Vegetable crudites with dips e.g. salsa, houmous

TIP: Keep snacks to a minimum if you are trying to lose weight

Contact details

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PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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