



Fiber Choices for Active People

You can barely pick up a health magazine without reading an article about how wonderful fiber is. Yet many people struggle to consume the recommended amount of fiber.

Learn why eating fiber is so beneficial, how athletes should add fiber if they need more and what foods are rich sources of fiber. Pamela Nisevich Bede, MS, RD, CSSD, LD, creative mind behind Nutrition for the Long Run, a wellness and nutrition communications consulting firm, and co-owner of Swim, Bike, Run, Eat! LLC, an online sports nutrition consulting firm, provides insights below.

Benefits of Fiber

Besides keeping you “regular,” why should you make sure you’re eating enough fiber?

- Fiber has a protective effect against cardiovascular disease in the overall population (IOM 2002; ADA 2008).
- Dietary and supplemental fiber (intakes of 20–27 grams per day [g/dy] from whole foods or up to 20 g/dy from supplements) may help with weight control (ADA 2008).
- There’s a clear association between a fiber-rich diet and a lower body mass index (BMI) (IFIC 2008).
- Many observational studies have found an association between high-fiber food consumption and reduced risk of type 2 diabetes (IFIC 2008; ADA 2008).
- Fiber-rich foods tend to be concentrated sources of cancer-fighting antioxidants, vitamins and minerals.

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How Much Fiber?

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends 14 g of fiber per 1,000 kilocalories (kcal) as an Adequate Intake (AI) for adults. This amount was derived from data on the relationship between fiber consumption and coronary heart disease risk. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends 25 g/day for women and 38 g/day for men (USDA 2010). See sources of fiber in chart.

Fiber for Athletes

If you’re an athlete or active person, there’s no need to eat excessive amounts of fiber. Instead, aim to consume the recommended AI for the general population (ADA, DC & ACSM 2009).

If you need to increase fiber intake to meet the AI, do so on a rest day or after workouts. You should also increase fiber gradually, and make sure you drink a lot of fluids. Pay careful attention to overall fluid intake in order to prevent dehydration and/or constipation. Supplemental fiber should be avoided during activity and is *not* recommended during strenuous activity. ■

References

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High-Quality, High-Fiber Choices

Adding fiber to the diet can be as easy as choosing nutrient-rich foods—such as legumes, whole grains and fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables—while avoiding nutrient-poor choices, such as soft drinks and processed foods. Try these high-fiber options.

grains		
barley, pearled, cooked	1 cup	6 g
oats, old-fashioned, dry	0.5 cup	4 g
popcorn, air-popped	3 cups	4 g
quinoa, cooked	1 cup	5 g
rice, brown, cooked	1 cup	4 g
peas and legumes		
black beans, cooked	1 cup	15 g
green peas, frozen	1 cup	14 g
kidney beans, cooked	1 cup	16 g
pinto beans	1 cup	15 g
split peas, cooked	1 cup	16 g
berries		
blackberries, raw	1 cup	8 g
raspberries, raw	1 cup	8 g
strawberries, raw	1 cup	3 g
nuts		
almonds	1 oz	4 g
flaxseed	1 oz	8 g
peanuts	1 oz	2 g
sunflower seeds	1 oz	3 g
walnuts	1 oz	2 g

Sources: Palmer 2008; USDA 2010.

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