

# How to increase the fibre in your diet

Information and advice for patients

## *Nutrition and Dietetics*

This information is for people who need a high fibre diet.

### **What is fibre?**

Dietary fibre is difficult to define but is a term to describe parts of food which reach the large intestine without being fully digested or absorbed. Fibre is found in plant foods such as fruit, vegetables, cereals and pulses.

### **Why is fibre important?**

- Dietary fibre is needed for bowel health and to help prevent constipation. Most people do not take enough fibre in their diet.
- Foods which naturally contain fibre contain important vitamins.
- Foods which contain fibre can fill you up without giving lots of calories – good if you are trying to watch your weight!

### **What happens if we do not have enough fibre in our diet?**

If we do not eat enough fibre we may be prone to constipation in the short term or in the long term place ourselves at an increased risk of some types of cancer and diverticular disease.

### **Practical ways to increase your fibre intake**

- Choose wholegrain/wholemeal/high fibre cereals
- Add a handful of dried nuts e.g. almonds, hazelnuts or walnuts, fruit or seeds to breakfast cereals or desserts or have as a snack
- Add extra beans, lentils and vegetables (fresh, frozen or tinned) to soups and stews
- Aim for a total of five portions of fruits and vegetables daily and try to eat the skins and stalks where possible
- Choose wholemeal varieties of pasta, bread and biscuits
- Try to eat the skins of potatoes
- If you do some home baking try to use half white flour and half wholemeal flour - you will need to add a little more liquid too

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### **Remember**

- Always increase your fibre intake gradually.
- Always drink plenty of fluids such as water, tea, coffee, milk, fruit squash or fruit juice. Aim for 8-10 cups a day. Fluid is needed as well as fibre for the passage and formation of stool.
- You do not need to add bran to food to have a high fibre diet.

### **Examples of high fibre foods**

- Bread - Wholemeal, high bran, granary, high fibre white or half/half wholegrain and white mixes
- Wholemeal pittas and chapattis
- Wholemeal scones, crumpets and muffins
- Cereal bars, digestive biscuits, fruit cake and fig rolls
- Wholemeal lasagne and pasta
- Brown rice
- High fibre or bran crispbreads and crackers
- Wholemeal, wholegrain, bran or high fibre cereals, porridge and muesli
- Nuts
- Vegetables and salad – raw, cooked, tinned or frozen (especially the skins and stalks)
- Fruit – fresh, frozen, tinned, cooked and dried (especially skins)
- Beans, lentils and chick peas
- Potatoes - boiled, baked with skin, roast and chipped

### **Example of a high fibre diet**

#### **Breakfast**

- Wholegrain cereal and fresh/dried fruit
- Wholemeal toast/crumpet
- Tea, coffee or fruit juice

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### **Mid Morning**

- Tea, coffee, fruit squash or water
- Fruit or high fibre biscuit/scone

### **Lunch (or Evening Meal)**

- Meat, fish, cheese, egg or beans/lentils
- Wholemeal bread/pitta
- Salad or vegetables
- Fruit
- Tea, coffee, fruit squash or water

### **Mid Afternoon**

- Tea, coffee, fruit squash or water
- Unsalted nuts or fruit

### **Evening Meal (or Lunch)**

- Meat, fish, cheese, egg or beans/lentils
- Potatoes (with skin), brown rice or wholemeal pasta/bread/chapattis
- Salad or vegetables
- Fruit (tinned, stewed or fresh)
- Tea, coffee, fruit squash or water

### **Supper**

- Tea, coffee or hot milky drink
- Wholemeal scone/toast/cereal or biscuit

## **Useful websites for further information**

### **Food Standards Agency**

[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

### **Core**

[www.corecharity.org.uk](http://www.corecharity.org.uk)

A charity providing information about gut, liver, intestinal and bowel conditions.

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website:

### **Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust**

[www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk)

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### Contact details

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

B.Thomas & J.Bishop, Manual of Dietetic Practice (4th edition), 2007

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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