

## What is dietary fibre?

Dietary fibre is found in vegetables, fruits, wholegrains, and legumes. It includes complex carbohydrates and associated plant substances. It promotes favourable bodily effects, like keeping bowel movements regular, lowering blood cholesterol, and blood glucose levels.

Fibre can be split in to two groups; soluble and insoluble, helping categorise function within the body.

- Soluble fibre dissolves in water and forms a gel that is easily absorbed by bacteria in the colon, making it fermentable. It is generally found in oats, barley, legumes, and citrus fruits. Dietary fibre is mostly linked with protecting against cardiovascular disease and diabetes, by lowering both blood cholesterol and glucose levels.
- **Insoluble fibre** does not dissolve in water, and therefore, does not form a gel, so is less easily fermented. Found predominantly in wholegrains like bran, and in vegetables, insoluble fibre may improve bowel movements and relieve constipation.

# Recommended daily intake (RDI)

Many New Zealanders do not get enough fibre, eating less than half the recommended daily quantity, which is 25g for women, and 30g for men. If a person is not eating much fibre, it is advisable to increase in the diet slowly, this reduces potential side effects of gas and bloating. It is important to note that a diet high in fibre is not suitable for preschool children, due to its filling nature. Young children will feel full faster, potentially restricting them from eating sufficient variety to meet their vitamin and mineral requirements.

# Tips for eating more fibre

- Aim for 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables daily. If you leave the skin on this will increase the amount of fibre.
- Opt for wholegrain breads, cereals, rice and pasta. When baking, experiment with wholemeal flour.
- Oats are a great breakfast option, and by adding nuts, seeds and fruit you increase fibre content.
- Add legumes i.e. chickpeas or lentils, to salads, soups, or stir-fry to bulk up the fibre content.
- When increasing fibre-nutrient foods, ensure you increase your water intake also. Fibre absorbs water in the body so it is important to stay well hydrated. This helps with comfortable bowel movement regularity too.

# **Helpful Resource**

# Ministry of Health - Eating and Activity Guidelines

Jones, G. P. & Hodgson, J. M. (2011). Carbohydrates. In M.L. Wahlqvist (Ed), Food & nutrition: Food and health systems in Australia and New Zealand (3rd ed., pp. 275). NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin

NZ Nutrition Foundation. (2018). Fibre. Retrieved from https://nutritionfoundation.org.nz/nutrition-facts/nutrients/carbohydrates/fibre Whitney, E., Rolfes, S.R., Crowe, T., Cameron-Smith, D., Walsh, A. (2017). The carbohydrates: sugars, starches and dietary fibre. In Understanding nutrition (3rd ed., pp 102-103). Victoria, Australia: Cengage Learning Australia

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