

Facts on Fibre

There are two main types of fibre - soluble and insoluble:

Insoluble fibre is found mainly in wholegrain cereal products. It adds bulk to the diet leaving us feeling fuller for longer, which can be useful if you are trying to lose weight. It is also good for the bowel and may help prevent constipation, haemorrhoids (piles) and some other bowel problems.

Soluble fibre is found mainly in fruits, vegetables, beans and pulses and oats. It helps to reduce high blood cholesterol levels, which is good for the heart. It can help control blood sugar levels if you are diabetic.

The following foods are high in insoluble fibre

Bread: wholemeal granary, Hi-bran, wholemeal pittas. If you dislike wholemeal bread, try high fibre white breads such as Kingsmill, whole and white, Warburton's, Good Health White and Hovis Best of Both. **Note:** Not all brown breads are wholemeal

Breakfast cereal: high fibre breakfast cereals include Weetabix, Weetaflakes, Shredded Wheat, Raisin Wheats, muesli, Allbran, Branflakes. For more variety, you can mix these with other cereals e.g. try a mix of Branflakes and Cornflakes or have chopped fruit on top of cereal.

Wholemeal flour: (or a mixture of wholemeal and white) makes good bread, cakes, pastry, pizza bases and chapattis made with atta no 3 and 4.

Cakes and biscuits: such as digestive biscuits, bran biscuits, wholegrain crispbreads. Cakes - try using a mixture of white and wholemeal flour in baking.

Seeds: (sunflower, sesame etc) can be added to cereals or sprinkled over desserts. Linseeds are very effective in reducing constipation, particularly partially cracked golden varieties available from health food shops - use as directed on the packet.

Nuts: can be used in sweet or savoury dishes (e.g. walnuts in fruit crumble topping, nut loaf) or as between meal snacks. However, if you are trying to lose weight, watch your intake as nuts are high in fat.

Brown rice and pasta: are higher in fibre than white varieties. Other high fibre starchy foods include cracked wheat, bulgar wheat and couscous and these are quick and easy to prepare. Wholemeal scones and tea-cakes are also higher in fibre than 'white' varieties.

The following foods are high in soluble fibre

Beans and pulses such as baked beans, chick peas, red kidney beans, butter beans, lentils, dhal. Try adding these to casseroles, soups and salads or as a main dish. They are available either tinned or dried.. When using dried beans soak for about eight hours, then boil rapidly for 15 minutes. Drain, add fresh water and simmer until cooked.

Oats such as porridge, oat biscuits, oatcakes, flapjacks. Try using rolled oats when making crumbles or biscuits in place of some flour.

Fruit and vegetables - fruit and vegetables are important for health—try to TAKE FIVE PORTIONS A DAY.

One portion equals:

- Two tbsp vegetables e.g. cabbage, peas, okra;
- small salad;
- fruit e.g. one apple/ one banana/ two satsumas/ two plums/a mango;
- two tbsp stewed/canned fruit;
- vegetables - eat plenty of salads and vegetables. Frozen vegetables are just as good as fresh.

Drinks

It is important to have enough fluid. Too little fluid can cause constipation. Aim for at least three pints (3/4 litres) of fluid a day. This is approximately eight mugs or 12 cups. Try a variety of drinks - water, tea, coffee, squash, fruit juice, herbal or fruit teas. Choose low calorie varieties if you are trying to lose weight.

Extra Wheat Bran

This is NOT recommended.

Adding unprocessed wheat bran can reduce the absorption of some vitamins and minerals by the gut. If wheat bran is taken with too little fluid it can cause constipation.

Recipes

Ask your dietitian for a recipe leaflet.

If you are concerned about your diet or have any queries regarding this advice please contact a dietitian at Bedford Hospital

Telephone: 01234 792171

Email: Dietetics@bedfordhospital.nhs.uk