

Increase your consumption of fibre-rich plant-based foods

Definition and sources of fibre

Dietary fibre is a non-digestible carbohydrate found in vegetables. It is not digested by the body but consumed by intestinal bacteria that make up the microbiota through fermentation in the colon. Intestinal microbiota are involved in many bodily functions, including the absorption of nutrients and the proper functioning of the immune system.

We find fibre in **fruits and vegetables**, **legumes** (lentils, chickpeas, dried beans, etc.), **whole-grain products** (whole-grain pasta, whole-grain rice, etc.) and **nuts and seeds** (almonds, nuts, hazelnuts, etc.).



fruits and vegetables



legumes



whole grains



nuts and seeds

Roles of dietary fibre

Eating fibre-containing foods every day has a number of health benefits:

- **Prevention and reduction of intestinal disorders**
- **Lower risk of cardiovascular disease**, especially through a decrease in absorption of lipids (fats) and therefore of cholesterol and triglycerides
- **Lower risk of diabetes** through a decrease in absorption of carbohydrates, limiting fluctuations in blood sugar
- **Combating obesity** thanks to the satiating effect of fibre-rich meals that allows you to reduce the amount of food consumed and prolongs the feeling of fullness, which limits snacking later
- **Prevention of colon cancer** due to reduced contact time between food and the intestinal wall, allowing toxic products to be evacuated in the stools. Added to this is the production of short-chain fatty acids with positive effects in this way during colonic fermentation.
- **Balance in the intestinal microbiota:** Through its prebiotic effect, because it contains good bacteria, fibre helps to maintain a balanced intestinal microbiota. This microbiota has many positive effects on health, such as proper functioning of the immune system, the production of certain vitamins and the regulation of mood.

How can you increase your fibre consumption?

- Eat a sufficient quantity of fruits and vegetables daily, in all forms:
 - **Frozen fruits and vegetables:** These are excellent alternatives, as this method of preserving ensures that the vitamins and minerals are retained. Choose those that contain no added sugar or seasonings.
 - **Canned fruits and vegetables:** Choose those that contain little or no salt/sodium or added sugar and rinse them before eating to reduce the salt content.
 - **Dried fruits** (dates, raisins, dried apricots, etc.): to be eaten only occasionally, as they are very high in sugar.
- **Choose raw fruits and vegetables** to fill up on fibre and enjoy the benefits of chewing.
- **Vary the way you prepare fruits and vegetables** for easier digestion: raw forms have more fibre, vitamins and minerals but can be harder to digest.
- **Choose whole-grain products** instead of refined products.
- **Replace part of the white flour with whole-grain flour** when you cook.
- **Increase your consumption of legumes.** If you don't usually eat them, try a new one every week to discover more of them!
- **Eat 1 small handful of nuts every day**, such as for a snack. Choose unsweetened and unsalted nuts.
- **Try new recipes that are easy and tasty!**

When eaten in overly large quantities, fibre can irritate your digestive system and cause bloating or intestinal pain. To avoid this, it is recommended that you increase your intake gradually to give your body time to adjust. Also, drink plenty of water during the day.



GOOD TO KNOW

Fruit juices

Fruit juices do not count as a fruit serving because they are high in sugar and low in fibre. It is recommended that you do not consume more than one glass a day and that you choose freshly squeezed juice.

"To reference this tool: Global-Watch. (2022). *Increase your consumption of fibre-rich plant-based foods*, available at www.global-watch.com."