

Better Bowel Habits

Constipation is a frequent complaint. This can be mild (small, hard stools) to severe (no bowel movements without a laxative).

Constipation is almost always due to insufficient fibre intake because our foods are so highly refined that there is little fibre left. Our forefathers ate about 60g of fibre per day; we eat only about 13g daily. Most of us need about 20-35g per day or more. One to three soft, formed stools a day is normal.

Canada's dietary guidelines: Recommendation of fibre intake with different ages and sexes:

AGE IN YEARS	GOAL FOR AN INTAKE OF GRAM(g) PER DAY
Men 19 to 50	38
Men 51 and older	30
Women 19 to 50	25
Women 51 and older	21
Pregnant Women 19 and older	28
Breastfeeding Women 19 and older	29

There are two types of fibre: insoluble and soluble. Soluble fibre is absorbed into the blood stream and is of no help to the bowel. The best source of insoluble fibre is cereal, but very few are truly high in fibre. In order to achieve better bowel habits, we suggest the following:

- ✓ Fibre 1 or All-Bran Cereals
- ✓ Please check the label to be sure the fibre content is close to 15g per serving. Be sure to drink a glass of water while you are eating it and another one afterwards. If necessary, you can eat another bowl of cereal in the evening. That alone would give you 30g of fibre per day. Some bloating may occur but this just means that the bowel is starting to work. It should subside in time.

- ✓ Other foods high in insoluble fibre content include most beans, brussel sprouts, corn, peas, acorn squash, potatoes with the skin on, blackberries, and raspberries.

Note: Always drink a glass of water whenever you have fibre. Fibre does not work without water. Coffee or juice does not help! If your bowel movements tend to become too frequent or loose, decrease the amount of fibre, as every individual's needs are different.

Some additional points to note:

- Wheat Bran 1-4 tbsp (green Quaker box) may be added to the above cereals or put in meatloaf etc. Remember to drink water with it!
- If you wish to lose some weight, have cereal and water 30mins before your main meal
- Avoid white bread and other cereals with low fibre content
- Fibre is an invisible chemical, not a stringy material that you can see
- There is no upper limitation for fiber consumption
- Avoid supplements and laxatives with Cascara or Senna

If you miss days without having a bowel movement, try this:

After waking up in the morning, drink a glass of warm water, insert a glycerin suppository and then make the bed, do sit-ups, touch your toes, etc. for three minutes to stimulate the bowel. Then sit on the toilet and push gently for two minutes. If nothing happens, leave. Do not read the paper on the toilet! If you do this daily for three to six months, you should be able to retrain your bowel. It is important not to miss one day from this routine. Lastly, whenever you have the urge to have a bowel movement, stop whatever you are doing and go immediately.

Fibre Contents in Some Common Foods

A desirable intake of fibre includes four to seven servings of fruits and vegetables per day, including fresh and uncooked vegetables. Along with these, at least two whole grain servings are advisable.

<i>Food Sources</i>	<i>Servin</i>	<i>Soluble Fibre</i>	<i>Insoluble Fibre</i>	<i>TOTAL Fibre</i>
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(cooked, unless otherwise noted)	Tomato	1 med	0.20	0.60	0.80	
	Celery, raw	½ cup	0.41	0.89	1.30	
	Broccoli	½ cup	1.00	0.50	1.50	
	Bean Sprouts, raw	½ cup	0.32	1.28	1.60	
	Cauliflower	½ cup	0.49	1.11	1.60	
	Sweet, baked potatoes	½ large	0.67	1.03	1.70	
	Turnip	½ cup	0.77	0.93	1.70	
	White, baked potatoes	½ med	0.95	0.95	1.90	
	Cabbage	½ cup	0.93	1.07	2.00	
	Eggplant	½ cup	0.80	1.20	2.00	
	Zucchini Squash	½ cup	1.00	1.00	2.00	
	Carrots	½ cup	1.00	1.50	2.50	
	Onions, raw	½ cup	0.84	1.76	2.60	
	Kale	½ cup	1.00	2.00	3.00	
	Asparagus	¾ cup	0.81	2.29	3.10	
	Corn Kernels	½ cup	1.74	2.16	3.90	
	Green Beans	½ cup	1.00	3.00	4.00	
	Peas	½ cup	1.13	2.97	4.10	
	Acorn Squash	½ cup	0.49	3.81	4.30	
	Lima Beans	½ cup	1.18	3.22	4.40	
	Brussels Sprout	½ cup	3.00	1.50	4.50	
	White Beans	½ cup	1.43	3.57	5.00	
	Cream canned corn	½ cup	2.42	2.68	5.10	
	Pinto Beans	½ cup	2.02	3.28	5.30	
	Kidney Beans	½ cup	3.00	3.00	6.00	
	Fruits (raw)	Grapes	12	0.09	0.41	0.50
		Cherries	10	0.28	0.92	1.20
Pineapple		½ cup	0.30	0.90	1.20	
Apricots		2	0.71	0.79	1.50	
Plums		3 small	0.69	1.11	1.80	
Grapefruit		½ med	1.00	1.00	2.00	
Peach		1 med	1.00	1.00	2.00	
Apple, with skin		1	1.00	2.00	3.00	
Banana		1 med	1.00	2.00	3.00	
Orange		1 med	2.00	1.00	3.00	
Blackberries		½ cup	1.00	3.00	4.00	
Pear		1 med	2.00	2.00	4.00	
Strawberries		1 cup	1.00	2.00	4.00	
Raspberries		1 cup	1.00	2.00	4.00	

and	bread				
Others	Saltine crackers	6	0.29	0.41	0.70
	Spaghetti	½ cup	0.29	0.51	0.80
	Rye bread	1 slice	0.31	0.59	0.90
	French bread	1 slice	0.34	0.66	1.00
	Brown rice	½ cup	0.20	2.20	2.40
	Graham crackers	2 sqs.	0.50	2.30	2.80
	Almonds	1/4 cup	1.00	2.00	3.00