

amber waves...of fiber?

Fiber in the Fight Against Obesity

While diets low in carbohydrates and high in protein continue to attract the public's attention, new research indicates "normal-weight" adults tend to eat more fiber and fruit than people who are overweight or obese.

Researchers at the University of Texas at Austin looked at dietary intakes of more than 100 people of generally the same age and height; half were considered normal weight and half were overweight or obese. The researchers found the diets of the two groups were similar in many ways, including intakes of sugar, bread, dairy products and vegetables.

The main difference between the groups: Normal-weight adults consume about 33 % more dietary fiber and 43 percent more complex carbohydrates each day than people who are obese.

As the Texas researchers acknowledge, "no magic formula exists for weight loss." But this study appears to offer more evidence that consuming a balanced diet that includes an adequate amount of fiber from plant foods (25 grams to 38 grams per day for adults — nearly twice the current national average) can benefit your health and weight.

Fiber: Make It Count for Kids

Consuming adequate amounts of fiber is important to everyone's health. When it comes to children, how much fiber is enough?

Following are fiber recommendations per day according to the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs).

Children (1-3 Years)	19 grams	Boys (9-13 Years)	31 grams
Children (4-6 Years)	25 grams	Girls (9-13 Years)	26 grams

For young children, good fiber choices include fruits and vegetables along with whole-grain cereals. As children get older, add beans, nuts and more whole grains to their eating plans.

Introducing your children to fiber at an early age will help lay the groundwork for their lifelong healthy eating habits.

Your Body's "Broom"

Eating enough fiber helps bowels function properly, can alleviate symptoms of chronic constipation and diverticular disease and may lower your risk for heart disease and some cancers.

- Look at fiber-rich fruits as ingredients in a meal as well as snacks: pears (four grams of fiber), apples (three grams), strawberries (three grams per cup) or a banana (two grams). Add these fruits to salads, cereal, yogurt, salsas or as a topping for any dessert.
- Read the label when buying cereal and choose those that provide at least two grams of fiber per serving.
- Try the rich, nutty flavor of short-grain brown rice (four grams of fiber per cup).
- Vegetables are a great natural source of fiber, so add them to your meals whenever you can: soups, pizza, sandwiches, pasta dishes and more.

You can meet your daily fiber needs by eating two cups of fruit and two and a half cups of vegetables each day (for a 2,000-calorie diet), as recommended in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. And drink plenty of water to help fiber do its job.

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