

# Fibre

A powerful nutrient  
essential for overall health

## FACT SHEET





Fibre is one of the most underappreciated nutrients. It plays an important role in supporting digestive health - helping to keep our bowels moving and functioning well! It also supports heart health, blood sugar control, and the feeling of fullness after meals. Even though it plays so many important roles, most of us do not have enough fibre – largely because we don't eat enough plant-based foods, such as wholegrains, nuts, seeds, legumes, fruits, and vegetables.

From this fact sheet, you will get to know the **health benefits of fibre**, **smart shopping tips** and **fibre boosters**. You will also find a sample meal plan to help you reach the recommended 30g+ of fibre per day!

## What is fibre and why is it a true superhero?<sup>(1)</sup>

Fibre is a type of carbohydrate – a nutrient found in plants. Unlike protein or fat, it is not broken down or absorbed in our small intestine but instead gets transported to our large intestine, where it helps feed the healthy bacteria in the gut through fermentation processes. And healthy gut bacteria feed our overall health!

**Fibre supports our health in three key ways - through:**



Adding bulk to stool, making it easier to **pass through our digestive system** and supporting regular bowel movements



**Slowing down the digestion** and absorption processes, allowing us to feel fuller for longer and reducing sugar spikes after meals



Feeding **healthy gut bacteria**, which supports gut and metabolic health

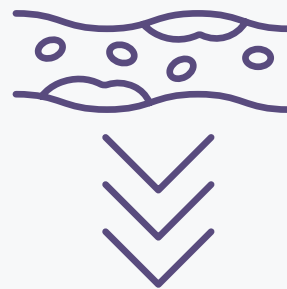
There is a range of different types of fibre. Some absorb water and form a gel-like texture in the digestive system. This can help with:



slowing down the absorption of sugar



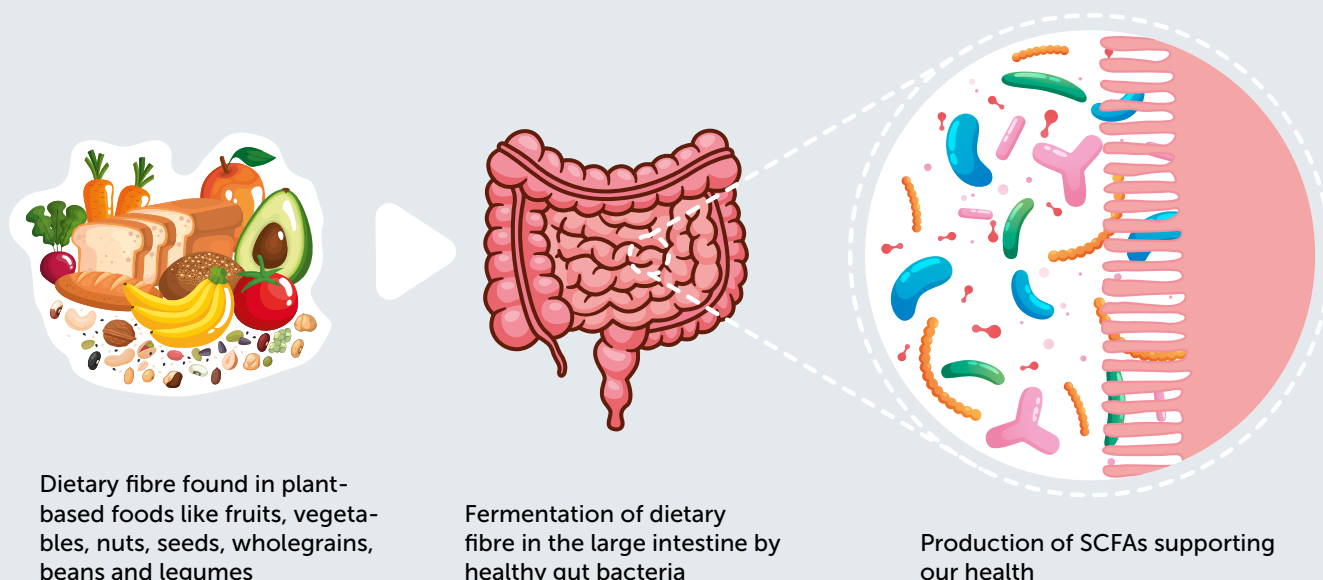
reducing blood sugar spikes after meals



lowering cholesterol absorption

Other types of fibre are fermented by gut bacteria in the large intestine. This process produces beneficial substances called short-chain fatty acids (SCFA), which support gut and overall health.

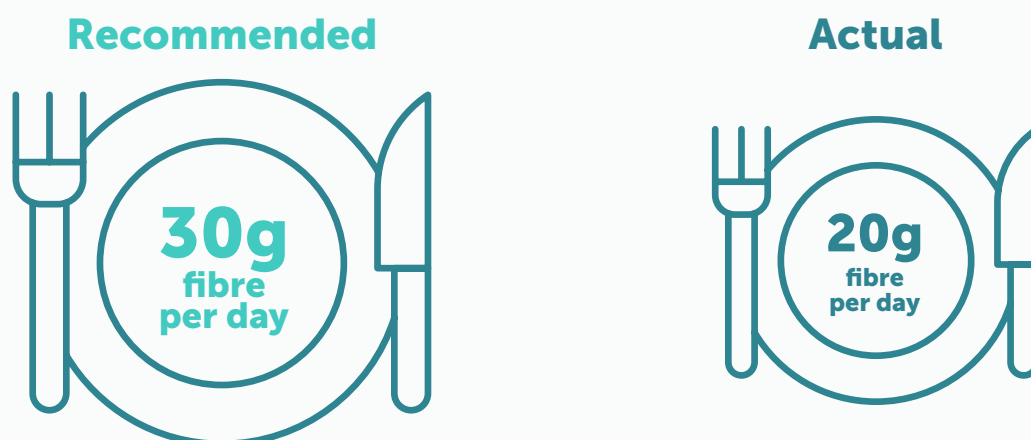
Fibre acts like your digestive system's **housekeeping team** - keeping things moving, aiding digestion, and feeding the good bacteria in your gut.



Fibre gets less attention than other nutrients, but its role in human health is vital!

## How much fibre should I have?

In the UK, the recommended fibre intake for adults is 30g, however currently the average fibre consumption across the UK population is less than 20g (5). Data suggest that British adults eat 12-14g less fibre than recommended!



A typical Western diet rich in animal-based and highly processed products, including meat, dairy, sweets and fizzy drinks and low in fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, nuts, seeds and whole grains is significantly lower in fibre than a healthy balanced diet promoted in the EatWell Guide.

## Why is fibre important for our health?



**Reduces the risk of developing colorectal cancer**



**Reduces inflammation**



**Lowers blood pressure**



**Reduces glucose spikes**



**Increases the feeling of fullness**



**Aids with adding bulk to stool and improving gut motility**



**Lowers circulating LDL cholesterol**

**Promotes healthy bacteria growth through:**

- Dietary fibre act as the food source that enables gut bacteria use to produce short-chain fatty acids (SFAs). These SFAs support immunity and lower the risk of disease including obesity, diabetes, cancer and allergy
- Helps to stop harmful bacteria from multiplying or surviving

What's not to love about fibre – just look at how many important roles it plays!

## Insoluble vs soluble fibre<sup>(2-4)</sup>

There are two main types of fibre – insoluble and soluble.

### Soluble fibre

Used by the gut bacteria in the large intestine to produce beneficial short chain fatty acids (SFAs) for health..

#### Commonly found in:

- Oats
- Lentils
- Apples
- Citrus fruits
- Psyllium Husk
- Chia seeds and flaxseeds
- Beans
- Legumes

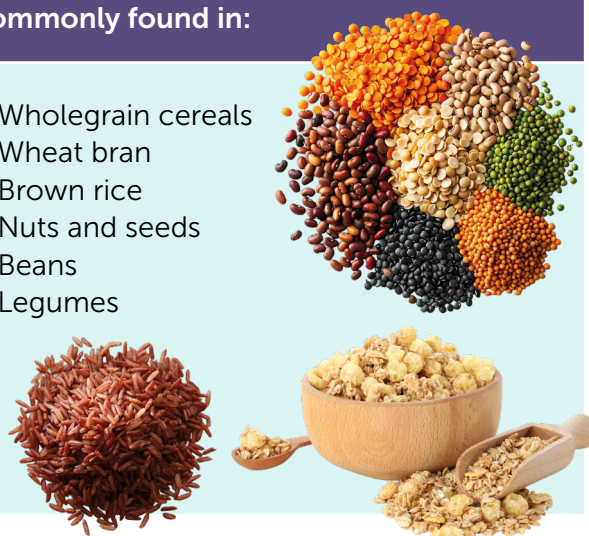


### Insoluble fibre

Insoluble fibre that does not dissolve in water but adds bulk to stools and helps food move through the digestive tract.

#### Commonly found in:

- Wholegrain cereals
- Wheat bran
- Brown rice
- Nuts and seeds
- Beans
- Legumes



Most plant-based foods high in fibre have both soluble and insoluble fibre. To make sure you get enough of each, aim to have a wide range of plant foods in your diet!<sup>(5)</sup>



## How do we know our bowels are working well? Meet the Bristol Stool Chart!

We don't talk enough about our bowels, but we really ought to!

Bristol Stool Chart is used by healthcare professionals to evaluate patients' stools. The shape, colour, smell and consistency of our stool can help us identify diarrhoea, constipation and be an important factor to consider when diagnosing different gut health-related conditions, like the Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

The role of fibre in constipation: Fibre (mainly insoluble fibre) can absorb water and add bulk to the stool, making it softer and helping it pass through the gut. **Fibre is a real superhero!**

### Bristol Stool Chart

**Type 1:** separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass).



**Type 2:** sausage-shaped but lumpy.



**Type 3:** like a sausage with cracks on the surface.



**Type 4:** Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft.



**Type 5:** soft blobs with clear-cut edges.



**Type 6:** fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy poo.



**Type 7:** Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely liquid.



Types 3 and 4 are the most ideal and suggest your bowel moves at a healthy pace!

Adapted from: NHS (2023)<sup>(6)</sup>

Please note: If you are experiencing prolonged diarrhoea or constipation, consult with a healthcare professional.

## Key tips to avoid the bloat!

Sometimes when we start eating too much fibre too fast, we may develop unpleasant symptoms, like bloating, excess gas and a change in bowel habit. This usually result from fermentation of fibre in the large bowel.

These symptoms may be uncomfortable, so here are a few tips to help ease them!



Gradual increase is key – add more fibre slowly but surely to allow extra time for your bacteria to get used to it



Drink enough fluids – extra water helps to avoid hard stools and difficulties in passing



Keep moving – light physical activity after meals helps the bowel move and relieve excess gas

### REMEMBER!



Increasing fibre content in some people – including those after certain surgeries, people living with particular gastrointestinal tract diseases, including (but not limited to) Crohn's disease, Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), gastroparesis or people experiencing other severe gastrointestinal symptoms, may not be beneficial. It is important to look at each case individually and consider consulting a healthcare professional before making any significant changes to the diet.

## Simple fibre boosters



Go for wholemeal and wholegrain bread, pasta, rice and wraps



Leave the skin on fruits and vegetables



Choose hummus as a sandwich spread or as a snack with fresh vegetables



Include nuts, dried fruits or popcorn as snacks



Sprinkle your meals with fibre boosters, like pumpkin, sunflower, sesame seeds or psyllium husk



Try adding mushrooms, beans and legumes to your sauces



Go for plant-based protein like beans, legumes, nuts, seeds, tofu or tempeh



## Shopping basket tips

Even though, beans and pulses and nuts and seeds are great sources of fibre, a lot of us are not eating them often enough! Include them in your next grocery run. If shopping online save them as favourites to help remind you on your next shop.

A non-exclusive list of high fibre ingredients (fibre content per 100g):



Adapted from: EUFIC (2023)<sup>(7)</sup>

## Food labels: where to look for fibre?

When you read food labels, check for the grams of fibre per serving or per 100g. Fibre content should be included either at the front or at the back of the food packaging.

One of the ways to spot high-fibre products easily at the supermarket is to look for products labeled as 'a source of fibre' or 'high in fibre':

For a food product to be considered '**a source of fibre**', it should contain **3g fibre or more per 100g**.

'High fibre' products should have 6g or more of fibre per 100g.

| NUTRITION INFORMATION TYPICAL VALUES |              |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Nutrient:                            | per 100g     |
| Energy                               | 404kj/96kcal |
| Fat                                  | 2.8g         |
| of which saturates                   | 0.8g         |
| of which monounsaturates             | 1.6g         |
| of which polysaturates               | 0.2g         |
| Carbohydrate                         | 7.3g         |
| of which sugars                      | 2.8g         |
| of which polyols                     | 0.1g         |
| of which starch                      | 4.4          |
| Protein                              | 9.3g         |
| Salt                                 | 0.1g         |
| Fibre                                | 2.3g         |

Each 828g portion contains:

| ENERGY            | FAT | SATFATS | SUGARS | SALT  |
|-------------------|-----|---------|--------|-------|
| 797kcal<br>3346kJ | 23g | 6.3g    | 23g    | 0.81g |
| 40%               | 33% | 32%     | 26%    | 14%   |

of an adult's reference intake

Typical energy as sold per 100g: 96kcal/404kJ

**>3g  
fibre  
per 100g** = Source  
of fibre

**>6g  
fibre  
per 100g** = High  
fibre

## Clever fibre-rich swaps!

|                                                        |                                                                                     |                   |                                                                                     |                                                                                                           | Fibre gained |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Butter on toast                                        |    | SWAP THIS WITH... |    | Hummus on wholegrain toast (30g)                                                                          | ~3g          |
| Chocolate bar (50g)                                    |    | SWAP THIS WITH... |    | Granola bar with flaxseeds, pumpkin and sunflower seeds (60g)                                             | ~4g          |
| Fruit-flavoured yoghurt                                |    | SWAP THIS WITH... |    | Yoghurt with 80g fruits and 1tsp psyllium husk                                                            | ~7g          |
| 5 rice cakes                                           |   | SWAP THIS WITH... |   | 5 wholegrain crackers                                                                                     | ~2g          |
| Cornflakes (30g) with milk                             |  | SWAP THIS WITH... |  | Porridge with 40g rolled oats, 1tbsp chia seeds and 80g berries                                           | ~7g          |
| Milk chocolate candies                                 |  | SWAP THIS WITH... |  | 70 % dark chocolate pieces (30g)                                                                          | ~2.5g        |
| Crisps (30g)                                           |  | SWAP THIS WITH... |  | Popcorn (30g)                                                                                             | ~2g          |
| 2 white bread toasts with jam (30g)                    |  | SWAP THIS WITH... |  | 2 wholemeal toasts, thinly spread with smooth peanut butter (30g)                                         | ~3.5g        |
| White spaghetti (50g dry weight) bolognaise with mince |  | SWAP THIS WITH... |  | Wholewheat spaghetti (50g dry weight) bolognaise replacing half the meat with 50g of drained tinned beans | ~7.5g        |



## Boost your fibre - tasty meal and snack tips

### Vegetable stir fry

With broccoli, bell peppers, peas and tofu or other protein source, sprinkled with sesame seeds, served with brown rice

Portion:

#### Stir Fry:

¾ cup firm tofu, cubed  
(or ¾ cup tempeh, edamame)  
1 cup broccoli florets  
½ cup sliced bell peppers  
70 g peas (snap peas or green peas)  
⅓–½ cup sliced carrots  
⅓ small onion, sliced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 tsp fresh ginger, grated  
1 tsp sesame oil or olive oil

#### Sauce:

1 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce  
2 tsp rice vinegar  
2 tsp water  
1 tsp maple syrup or honey  
1 tsp cornstarch

#### Rice & Garnish:

½ cup cooked brown rice  
2 tsp sesame seeds  
Optional: 1 tbsp sliced green onions



**Fibre  
estimate:  
~10–14g**



### Black bean & sweet potato tacos

Wholegrain or corn tortillas filled with black beans, roasted sweet potato, cabbage slaw, and salsa

Portion:

One portion (~4 tbsp) cooked black beans  
One medium sweet potato, peeled and cubed  
1 tsp olive oil  
⅓ onion, sliced  
¾ cup red or green cabbage, shredded  
3 tbsp carrot, shredded  
2 tsp lime juice  
1 tbsp coriander, chopped  
2 corn tortillas or 2 small wholegrain tortillas  
2½ tbsp salsa  
1½ tsp chili powder  
¾ tsp cumin  
½ tsp smoked paprika  
¼ tsp salt  
Pinch of black pepper  
1 clove garlic, minced



**Fibre  
estimate:  
~15–20g**



### Yoghurt\* with high-fibre toppings

Plant-based or dairy yoghurt with fruits and sunflower seeds

Portion:

200 g yogurt  
plant  
1 cup (~100–120g) berries or chopped fruit  
1 tbsp sunflower seeds

**Fibre  
estimate:  
~5–8g**



### Overnight oats

With plant-based drink, kiwi and cold-milled flax seeds

Portion:

1 portion oats (½ cup)  
+/- one glass plant-based drink\*  
1 kiwi  
1 tbsp ground flaxseed

**Fibre  
estimate:  
~8–10g**



### Chia seeds pudding

Plant-based drink\*\*, banana and berries

Portion:

3–4 tbsp chia seeds  
~1 cup of plant-based drink  
1 banana  
½–1 cup berries

**Fibre  
estimate:  
~6–9g**



\* we recommend fortified plant-based yogurt as it is a good source of fibre and also better for the planet than dairy. Dairy does not have fibre but you can substitute with dairy if preferred.

\*\* we recommend fortified plant-based drinks as they are a source of fibre and good for the planet too. However, if dairy if preferred it can be substituted.

## How could your 30g fibre a day look like?

### Breakfast

#### Rich fruity porridge

one portion of porridge  
oats  
1 tbsp chia seeds  
1 tsp ground flaxseed  
cupped hands of berries  
or 1 kiwi  
¾ glass Unsweetened  
soya drink\*

**Fibre  
estimate:  
~10g**



### Lunch

#### Hummus & roasted veg sandwich

2 slices seeded wholegrain bread  
2 tbsp hummus  
¼ red pepper  
¼ courgette  
¼ red onion  
Handful rocket or spinach  
1 tsp olive oil  
A sprinkle of sunflower seeds

**Fibre  
estimate:  
~8–9g**

### Dinner

#### Lentil & Vegetable Curry with Brown Rice

½ cup cooked green/brown lentils  
**Optional:** an additional source of protein of  
choice (tofu, tempeh, beans, chicken)  
⅓ small onion, chopped  
1 clove garlic, minced  
½ cup chopped carrots  
2 packed cups spinach  
(or about 1 large handful cooked down)  
⅔ cup canned chopped tomatoes  
⅓ cup cooked brown rice

#### Curry spices:

1 tsp turmeric  
1 tsp cumin  
1½ tsp garam masala

#### Toppings:

1 tbsp hemp seeds or roasted  
pumpkin seeds

**Fibre  
estimate:  
~9-10g**



### Snack

#### Hummus & crunchy veg pot

~3tbsp hummus  
1 small carrot  
½ cucumber  
½ red bell pepper  
1 wholegrain cracker

**Fibre  
estimate:  
~6–7g**



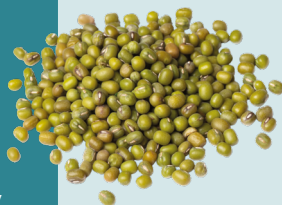
# Total fibre: ~31-34g

\* we recommend unsweetened fortified soya drink as it is a good source of fibre and is also good for the planet. Dairy has no fibre and is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Dairy can be substituted if desired.

## Summary

Fibre is an important part of a healthy diet and supports overall health. Eating more fibre-rich foods - like wholegrains, fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds - can help you gradually reach the recommended 30g of fibre a day. Reading food labels and making simple swaps can make this easier!

Remember - increase fibre slowly, drink plenty of water, and stay active to help your body adjust comfortably. A fibre-rich diet supports your gut health now and your well-being in the future!



This fact sheet was created by the nutrition and dietetic team at [MyNutriWeb.com](https://www.mynutriweb.com)

## References

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