

Fiber and Diabetes: What You Need to Know

Fiber plays an important role in keeping your child's blood sugar levels within a normal range. Fiber also has other important jobs in the body, like helping you feel full after eating and keeping a healthy weight. In this handout, you will learn about fiber and how it can affect your child's diabetes.

WHAT IS FIBER?

Fiber is a nutrient that comes from plants, like fruits, vegetables, legumes (beans and lentils) and whole grains.

WHY IS FIBER IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES?

There are 2 types of fiber – **soluble** and **insoluble**. **Soluble fiber** helps control blood sugar levels and lower cholesterol (fat in the blood). **Insoluble fiber** keeps your stomach and intestines healthy. Both types of fiber help your child keep a healthy weight.

HOW CAN I TELL HOW MUCH FIBER IS IN A CERTAIN FOOD?

Check the nutrition label. Fiber is measured in grams. Look for the following words:

- Fiber
- Soluble fiber

HOW MUCH FIBER DOES MY CHILD NEED?

The amount of fiber your child needs depends on his age. It also depends on his nutritional or medical needs.

Here is how much fiber a typical child should get every day:

- Age 3-5: 11 grams (g)
- Age 6-11: 13 g
- Age 12-8: 15-20 g

HOW CAN I ADD FIBER TO MY CHILD'S DIET?

- Choose whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes more often than processed foods.
- Leave the skin on different fruits and vegetables, like apples.
- As your child eats more fiber, have him drink more water. This will help keep his stomach and intestines healthy. It will also help prevent gas and bloating.
- Sprinkle chia seeds or flax seeds onto oatmeal, salad or whole grain bread.

WHO CAN HELP ME LEARN TO ADD FIBER AND MAKE A MEAL PLAN?

- A **registered dietitian** in Pediatric Endocrinology at MassGeneral Hospital for Children.

To schedule an appointment with a registered dietitian or to ask questions, call Pediatric Endocrinology at 617-726-2909

Did you know...?

Fiber can cause bloating or excess gas. To help ease bloating or gassiness, have your child drink lots of water every day. Adding fiber slowly into your child's diet can also help.