

Trading Up to Whole Grains and Fiber

Simple tips for getting more fiber in your diet every day.

By: EatingWell Editors

Dietary guidelines recommend 25 grams of fiber

a day for women and 38 grams of fiber a day for men. Most of us eat only about half the recommended fiber per day, but getting more whole grains and fiber in your diet is easier and tastier than you might think. Aim to get at least half of your grain-based foods (at least three servings) from whole-grain sources. Here are some tried-and-true tips to get more whole-grain fiber in your diet.

Swap out. Seek out whole-grain versions of your favorite foods, such as whole-wheat pasta, whole-wheat bread, brown rice and whole-grain crackers. If you don't like one brand, experiment with another; there are so many choices nowadays, you're sure to find one you love.

Sneak in. Phase in a whole grain by mixing it half-and-half with a refined one—for example, a blend of whole-wheat and regular pasta, or half brown and half white rice. Gradually increase the proportions until your palate—and digestive tract—have adjusted.

Start smart. Cross a serving or two of whole grains off your list before sunup: have a bowl of old-fashioned or quick (not instant) oatmeal, or whole-grain breakfast cereal. Look for cereals with at least 5 grams of fiber per serving and/or those that carry a seal identifying them as an “excellent” or “good” source of whole grains.

Think outside the (cereal) box. Expand your whole-grain pantry: how about bulgur (cracked, steamed and dried wheat kernels), whole-wheat couscous, quinoa or millet? A trip to a natural-foods store may inspire you.

Read, read, read. Become a label reader, zeroing in on the “dietary fiber” value. Compare brands and choose those that offer the highest numbers.

Eat your veggies and then some. Forget “five-a-day”; many nutrition experts suggest aiming much higher. Try to make vegetables—preferably nonstarchy types like greens and broccoli—a part of every meal and snack.

Eat (don't drink) your produce. When fruits or vegetables are processed to make juice, most of the beneficial fiber is left behind.

Ditch the peeler. Don't peel edible skins from fruits and vegetables if you can help it. To avoid pesticide residues, wash skins thoroughly before eating and opt for organic varieties whenever possible.



Photo Credit: Scott Little