

Eating for a healthy gut

When one suffers from gastrointestinal symptoms such as constipation, diarrhoea, bloating or abdominal cramps often associated with conditions such as piles, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory diseases (ulcerative colitis, celiac disease and Crohn's disease), the food you eat could have a significant impact on your health.¹



Looking at what we eat is the first step in the management of gastrointestinal disease. For some diseases, like piles, the main cause for the condition is constipation, which can be minimised through making dietary adjustment.^{2,3}

High-fibre diet^{4,5}

Target symptom: *Constipation*

Conditions it may present in: *Piles, IBS with constipation*

A diet rich in fibre with adequate fluids can help shorten the time food takes to move through the intestines and increase stool weight to prevent constipation. The daily recommended consumption is 25 to 30 g of fibre either in the form of high-fibre foods or commercial fibre supplements. Most fibre is not digested and stays in the intestines where it changes the way other food is digested and the consistency of stool.^{2,3,5}

Food	Serving	Grams of fibre
Apple (with skin)	1 medium apple	4.4
Banana	1 medium banana	3.1
Oranges	1 orange	3.1
Prunes	1 cup, pitted	12.4
Green beans (cooked)	1 cup	4.0
Carrots (cooked)	1/2 cup sliced	2.3
Peas (cooked)	1 cup	8.8
Potato (baked, with skin)	1 medium potato	3.8
Cucumber (with peel)	1 cucumber	1.5
Lettuce	1 cup shredded	0.5
Tomato	1 medium tomato	1.5
Spinach	1 cup	0.7

Food	Serving	Grams of fibre
Baked beans, canned	1 cup	13.9
Kidney beans, canned	1 cup	13.6
Lima beans, canned	1 cup	11.6
Lentils, boiled	1 cup	15.6
Bran muffins	1 medium muffin	5.2
Oatmeal, cooked	1 cup	4.0
Bread - rye	1 slice	2.0
Whole-wheat bread	1 slice	1.9
Macaroni/Spaghetti (regular)	1 cup	2.5
Rice, brown	1 cup	3.5
Rice, white	1 cup	0.6
Almonds	1/2 cup	8.7
Peanuts	1/2 cup	7.9

Adapted from Wald, 2018; Mayo Clinic, 2018.⁵⁶



Soluble vs. insoluble fibre⁵

Soluble fibre:

- Made up of carbohydrates which dissolves in water
- Found in fruits, oats, barley, peas and beans

Insoluble fibre:

- Comes from plant cell walls and does not dissolve in water
- Found in wheat, rye and other grains

Fibre may cause bloating and should be increased slowly, and it may be wise to choose more soluble fibre than insoluble fibre. In some conditions, like IBS-patients that do not tolerate fibre or suffer from diarrhoea rather than constipation, and in the inflammatory bowel diseases, fibre might not be recommended.^{1,5}

General dietary considerations for a healthy gut:^{3,4,7,8}



Eat smaller, more frequent meals, on a regular basis



Reduce intake of fats and spices



Reduce caffeine consumption



Reduce alcohol consumption



Avoid processed, junk food and carbonated drinks



References: 1. Diet Your Way to Health: Special Diets for Gastrointestinal Disorders. [Online] Gastrointestinal Specialist Inc. [Online]. Available from <https://www.gastrova.com/article/special-diets-gastrointestinal-disorders/>. Accessed 2020/02/26. 2. Taha MA, Steele RJC. BMJ Best Practice: Hemorrhoids. 28 Jan 2016. Available from https://nmo.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/15133/2016_0128_BMJ-bp_Haemorrhoids.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 2020/02/26. 3. Eiden KA. Nutritional Considerations in Inflammatory Bowel Disease. Practical Gastroenterology, May 2003. Available from <https://med.virginia.edu/ginutrition/wp-content/uploads/sites/199/2015/11/eidenarticle-May-03.pdf>. Accessed 2020/02/23. 4. Dugum M, Barco K, Garg S. Managing irritable bowel syndrome: The low-FODMAP diet. Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine 2016;83(9):655-662. 5. Wald A. Patient education: High-fiber diet (Beyond the Basics). 14 Sept 2018. UpToDate [Online]. Available from <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/high-fiber-diet-beyond-the-basics/print?topicRef=2013&source=see-link>. Accessed 2020/02/24. 6. Nutrition and healthy eating. MayoClinic. 17 Nov 2018. [Online]. Available from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/high-fiber-foods/art-20050948?pg=1>. Accessed 2020/02/28. 7. Altobelli E, Del Negro VD, Angeletti PM, Latella G. Low-FODMAP Diet Improves Irritable Bowel Syndrome Symptoms: A Meta-Analysis. 8. Majeed S, Gohar F, Riaz M. Prevalence of inflammatory bowel disease and associated predisposing factors. International Journal of Applied Research 2018;4(2):208-211.