



Fibre and Bowel Care

After spinal cord injury, people may need to make changes to their diet to have a bowel movement. For some people, a bowel routine is done on a schedule. Eating well can make a difference in your bowel care and supplement your bowel routine. Improving fiber and water intake can also help. You might find some foods can help reduce bowel accidents and constipation.

Eating the Right Amount of Fibre

Fibre is a kind of carbohydrate that is not digested. It passes through your body without being broken down. Fibre adds volume to your stool helping it move through the bowels. This helps you have better bowel movements. It can be found in plant foods such as vegetables, fresh fruit, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.

Eating the right amount and type of fiber is important. Too much insoluble fibre can lead to soft stool and diarrhea. Too little fibre can cause you to have hard stool and constipation. If you do not currently eat enough fibre increase your intake slowly. Start at 15g of fibre each day, and slowly work towards having regular bowel movements. This might be at **25 to 30 grams of fiber** (about 1 oz.) each day. Some people may not tolerate high fibre diets. If eating too much fibre does not make you feel well, lower the amount of fibre in your diet. For most people, try to drink **2 to 3 liters of water** (8-12 cups) a day. Increasing fibre too quickly without drinking enough water may lead to constipation.

Types of Fibre

Insoluble Fibre cannot be digested. It passes through the digestive system and helps with bowel movements. Foods include: flax seed, wheat bran, fruits and vegetables with the peel, leafy green vegetables, whole grain breads and pastas.

Soluble Fibre is a gentler, “bulking” type of fibre which your body can partially digest. This fibre can lower cholesterol. Foods include squash, oatmeal and oat products, psyllium (in some cereals & Metamucil), bananas, applesauce, carrots, and apples without the peel.

Contact your Dietitian for more information.

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Try to eat between **25 30 grams** of fibre each day. Drink about 2 3 Liters (8 12 cups) of fluid each day.

Reducing Constipation

Constipation is hard stool that is difficult to pass during a bowel movement. It is also not having enough bulk for a bowel movement and not being able to empty completely. Insoluble fiber helps your colon pull water from your body into your stool. This makes it softer and easier to pass. If you're often constipated, eat a fiber-rich diet.

Start by adding extra fibre to one meal every day and gradually add more to other meals if tolerated. Remember to drink more water while increasing fibre.

- Focus on foods high in **insoluble fibre**.
- Add wheat bran to smoothies, oatmeal, or cereal.

Improving Soft Stool and Diarrhea

Too much water in the stool causes soft stool and diarrhea. It can increase your risk of having bowel accidents. Soluble fibre absorbs water to form a gel which slows down digestion. This prevents stool from moving too quickly through your bowels and helps to improve diarrhea. Well-formed stool makes it easier to empty your bowels completely.

- Include at least one portion of soluble fibre at all meals from fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Avoid foods that bother your digestive tract. This may include caffeine, alcohol, strong spices, and black pepper.
- Eating a lot of sugar, chocolate, candy, syrup, and sugar free foods that contain artificial sweeteners can lead to gas, bloating and diarrhea.
- Avoid high fat foods, and potato chips.

People tolerate food differently, if a food does not agree with you, reduce your intake and seek advice from health professional.

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This table can help you find foods high in fibre. Use it to find the right amount of daily fibre intake.

| Food | Serving Size | Fibre (grams) |
|---|------------------|---------------|
| Vegetables and Fruit | | |
| Green peas, cooked | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 3.7 – 5.6 |
| Potato, with skin, cooked | 1 medium | 2.8 – 4.3 |
| Edamame/baby soybeans, cooked | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 4.3 |
| Spinach | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 2.3 – 3.7 |
| Avocado | ½ fruit | 6.7 |
| Pear, with skin | 1 medium | 5.0 |
| Raspberries or blackberries | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 4.0 – 4.2 |
| Orange | 1 fruit | 3.6 |
| Cauliflower, cooked | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 1.8 – 2.6 |
| Broccoli, fresh or frozen, cooked | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 2.0 – 2.3 |
| Carrot, cooked | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 2.2 |
| Corn, fresh or frozen, cooked | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 1.7 – 2.2 |
| Grain Products | | |
| Bran (100% Bran, All Bran) | 30g | 10.0 – 12.0 |
| Bran (corn, wheat, rice), raw | ¼ cup | 4.2 – 15.8 |
| Muffin, oat bran | 1 small | 3.0 |
| Bread (whole wheat, rye) | 1 slice (35 g) | 2.0 – 2.4 |
| Pasta (white, whole wheat), cooked | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 1.3 – 2.4 |
| Rice (brown, wild), cooked | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 1.5 – 2.0 |
| Meats and Alternatives | | |
| Beans (small white, yellow, black, pinto, kidney, navy), cooked | 175 mL (3/4 cup) | 8.6 – 13.8 |
| Lentils, cooked | 175 mL (3/4 cup) | 6.2 |
| Chickpeas,/garbanzo beans, cooked | 175 mL (3/4 cup) | 5.5 |
| Coconut, dried, shredded | 125 mL (1/2 cup) | 7.8 |
| Almonds, whole | 60 mL (1/4 cup) | 3.8 – 4.1 |

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