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Fiber: A Simple Nutrient with Powerful Health Benefits

Getting more fiber in your diet might be one of the simplest ways to improve your health—yet many people overlook it. Think of fiber as a quiet “superpower” that supports your digestive system and overall well-being. Despite its benefits, most Americans do not get enough fiber in their daily diets. General guidelines suggest consuming about 14 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories, which equals roughly 25–30 grams per day for most adults.

What Is Fiber?

Dietary fiber is a type of carbohydrate that your body cannot fully digest. There are two main types of fiber, and both play important roles in maintaining good health:

- **Soluble fiber** dissolves in water and forms a gel-like substance in the digestive system. It helps slow digestion and can be found in foods such as oats, barley, beans, lentils, nuts, and some fruits and vegetables.
- **Insoluble fiber** does not dissolve in water. Instead, it adds bulk to your stool and helps food move through the digestive tract. Whole grains and many vegetables are good sources of insoluble fiber.

Why Fiber Matters

Including the right amount of fiber in your diet offers a wide range of health benefits:

- **Supports digestive health**
Fiber helps promote regular bowel movements and can prevent constipation by adding bulk to stool. It may also help reduce the risk of digestive conditions such as diverticulitis.
- **Promotes heart health**
Fiber can help lower cholesterol levels, which may reduce the risk of heart disease.
- **Helps manage blood sugar**
By slowing digestion, fiber helps prevent sharp spikes in blood glucose levels.
- **Aids in weight management**
High-fiber foods help you feel full longer, which may reduce overeating and support healthy weight goals.
- **May lower cancer risk**
Fiber has been linked to a reduced risk of certain cancers, including colorectal cancer, due to its positive effects on gut health.
- **Reduces risk of chronic disease**
Diets rich in fiber are associated with a lower risk of conditions such as obesity and type 2 diabetes.

How to Add More Fiber to Your Diet

If you are not used to eating fiber-rich foods, start small and build gradually to avoid digestive discomfort. Here are a few simple ways to increase your intake:

- Choose whole grains like brown rice, oatmeal, and whole wheat bread
- Add beans, lentils, or peas to soups, salads, and side dishes
- Snack on fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds

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- Include a variety of plant-based foods in your meals

As you increase fiber, remember to drink plenty of water. Fluids help move fiber through your digestive system and prevent discomfort.

Small Changes, Big Impact

Adding more fiber to your daily routine does not have to be complicated. By making a few simple changes, you can support your digestive health, lower your risk of chronic disease, and improve your overall well-being.