

# Fibre Facts for Pregnancy



Constipation is a common problem of pregnancy, caused by changes that take place in the body. First of all, you have more of the hormone progesterone when you are pregnant. This makes the muscles of your digestive tract relax, moving food along more slowly. Also, the use of iron supplements and the pressure from your uterus can both slow the movement of food through your intestines. Slow-motion digestion gives your body more time to absorb the nutrients from your diet, but unfortunately it can also cause constipation.

Preventing constipation is as easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Eat lots of fibre
2. Drink plenty of water
3. Get regular exercise

The fibre from food creates bulkier, softer stools that pass through the body more quickly and easily. Since water is excreted along with fibre it is important to drink plenty of water or other fluids to prevent dehydration and avoid hard, dry stools. Exercise helps by maintaining your muscle tone.



## Fibre Boosters

Fibre should not be hard to swallow – not with the variety of good tasting, inexpensive and nutritious choices available. As an added benefit, most high fibre foods are rich in vitamins and minerals.

- Choose breads and rolls that list a whole grain flour first on the label, such as *whole* wheat, oat or rye flour.
- Choose ready-to-eat cereals made from bran and whole grains.
- Rolled oats, oat bran and whole grains are the best cooked cereal choices.
- Choose raw fruits and vegetables, and eat the peels whenever possible. Enjoy a variety of salads.
- Choose fruit for snacks and desserts. Fruits have more fibre than juices.
- Occasionally have beans, lentils or dried peas instead of meat, fish or poultry.
- Sprinkle wheat bran or high-fibre bran cereal over cereal or add to muffins, cookies or meatloaf.
- Try low fat, high fibre cookies such as sultanas or fig bars. Make your own oatmeal and raisin cookies at home.

# Where Does Fibre Come From?

Experts recommend that we eat 25 to 30 grams of fibre every day. Since most of us only eat around 15 grams per day, we need to double the amount we are eating now. The following table gives you an idea of the amount of fibre in breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Meats and dairy products are not listed because they don't contain any fibre.

| Serving   | <b>BREADS &amp; CEREALS</b> | Grams of Fibre | Serving | <b>FRUITS</b>             | Grams of Fibre |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------|---------------------------|----------------|
| ¾ cup     | "all bran" cereals          | 19.8           | 10      | Prunes                    | 10.0           |
| ¾ cup     | Bran flake cereals          | 3.4            | ½ cup   | Raisins, seedless         | 7.6            |
| ¾ cup     | Shreddies                   | 2.8            | ½ cup   | Dates, pitted and chopped | 7.2            |
| 1 biscuit | Shredded Wheat              | 2.4            | ½ cup   | Dried apricots, uncooked  | 5.6            |
| ¾ cup     | Cooked brown rice           | 1.5            | 1       | Pear                      | 4.7            |
| 1 slice   | 100% whole wheat bread      | 1.4            | 1       | Apple                     | 3.5            |
| ½ cup     | Cooked oatmeal              | 1.1            | ½ cup   | Raspberries               | 3.3            |
| 1 cup     | Cooked macaroni             | 1.2            | 1       | Orange (medium)           | 2.6            |
| ¾ cup     | Cooked white rice           | .4             | 1       | banana                    | 2.4            |
| 1 slice   | White bread                 | .4             | ½ cup   | Blueberries               | 2.1            |

  

| Serving | <b>VEGETABLES</b>   | Grams of Fibre | Serving | <b>LEGUMES</b>       | Grams of Fibre |
|---------|---------------------|----------------|---------|----------------------|----------------|
| ½ cup   | Mashed sweet potato | 4.2            | 1 cup   | Baked beans, canned  | 20.7           |
| ½ cup   | Broccoli            | 2.7            | 1 cup   | Kidney beans, cooked | 16.5           |
| ½ cup   | Turnip, mashed      | 2.7            | 1 cup   | Lima beans, cooked   | 9.0            |
| ½ cup   | Brussel sprouts     | 2.5            | 1 cup   | White beans, cooked  | 8.3            |
| ½ cup   | Carrots             | 2.5            | ½ cup   | Peanuts              | 6.2            |
| ½ cup   | Corn                | 2.4            | ½ cup   | Almonds, whole       | 5.4            |
| ½ cup   | Stewed tomatoes     | 2.0            | 1 cup   | Split peas, cooked   | 4.8            |

It is best to get fibre from food, rather than supplements. Add fibre slowly to your diet, so you won't get cramps. If gas is a problem, avoid foods that sometimes cause gas. This includes cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and legumes. Add them back one by one to find out how much you can handle.

*Adapted from Brant County Health Unit*



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