# IMPORTANCE OF FIBER FOR WEIGHT-LOSS & OVERALL HEALTH



# FIRST OFF, WHAT IS FIBER AND WHY IS IT SO GOOD FOR US?

Dietary fiber, also known as roughage, is an indigestible substance found in plant foods. Unlike other food components, such as fats, proteins or carbohydrates — which your body breaks down and absorbs — fiber cannot be digested by the body. Instead, it passes relatively intact through your stomach, small intestine and colon and out of your body. From helping dieters shed unwanted pounds, to lowering the risk of developing heart disease and diabetes, fiber packs a powerful punch. High-fiber diets have been shown to reduce the occurrence of several chronic diseases. In fact, doubling your fiber intake could reduce your chances of developing colorectal cancer by 40 percent. And that's not all —fiber can help lower cholesterol, which helps lower the risk of heart disease.

## HOW DOES FIBER HELP US LOSE WEIGHT?

High-fiber foods tend to be lower in calories and, because of their bulk and water content, they help you stay fuller longer. This can prevent overeating and obesity.

### WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF HIGH FIBER FOODS?

Dietary fiber is found mainly in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and seeds and comes in soluble and insoluble forms. Soluble fiber, which dissolves in water, is found in fruit (e.x., oranges, apples, pears, berries), legumes and cereal grains (oatmeal, barley, bran), and helps lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. It is also known as the "heart healthy" fiber. Insoluble fiber—found mostly in whole grains, legumes, vegetables and dark leafy greens—doesn't dissolve in water and helps improve intestinal function and relieve constipation. Both are equally as important to include in a well-balanced diet and can lower the risk coronary disease, metabolic syndrome and obesity.

### HOW MUCH FIBER SHOULD I BE EATING EACH DAY?

The recommended daily amounts for fiber are 38 grams for men under 50, and 25 grams for women under 50—that's a lot of fiber! To fit it all in, try starting your day off with a high-fiber cereal or oatmeal, mixing in some prunes or other fruit to add even more fiber. For lunch, use

whole grain bread for your sandwich, or eat a fiber-rich salad full of veggies, legumes, nuts and seeds. For a boost of fiber any time, try mixing some ground flaxseed into your smoothie, soup, casserole, or just about anything else you desire. Flaxseed contains a balance of both soluble and insoluble fiber and one tablespoon will boost your daily fiber intake by 3 grams.

# ARE THERE SUPPLEMENTS OR OTHER THINGS WE CAN TAKE TO BOOST OUR DAILY FIBER INTAKE?

When it comes to fiber, nothing beats consuming in its natural, plant form. That being said, supplements like Metamucil can be good short-term solutions for people who have gastrointestinal problems or trouble getting enough fiber. If you do decide to try a supplement, start incorporating it into your daily diet slowly and drink plenty of water to avoid discomfort.