

# McHenry County Department of Health

“Working to prevent disease and promote health and safety  
for all people of McHenry County since 1966”



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## Fiber and Your Health

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Fiber is a material found only in plant foods and is a part of the plant that our body can't digest. The best sources of fiber are fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans.

Research shows that intake of fiber can reduce the risk of developing a number of conditions including heart disease, diverticular disease and constipation. Fiber can also help in prevention of diabetes by slowing digestion and absorption of carbohydrates. Foods that are high in fiber can help with weight loss by creating bulk and promoting a feeling of fullness.

The two types of fiber are soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber can help to lower blood cholesterol as well as to lower levels of blood sugar. Sources of soluble fiber include oatmeal, apples, beans, blueberries, carrots and citrus fruits. Insoluble fiber prevents constipation by increasing stool bulk and helping to move food through the digestive system. Some sources of insoluble fiber are whole wheat flour, cucumbers, tomatoes, green beans and tomatoes. A list of sources of both soluble and insoluble fiber can be found on Harvard University Health Services at [http://huhs.harvard.edu/assets/File/OurServices/Service\\_Nutrition\\_Fiber.pdf](http://huhs.harvard.edu/assets/File/OurServices/Service_Nutrition_Fiber.pdf)

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 recommend a goal of 25 grams of fiber a day for women and 38 grams per day for men. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, most Americans eat only about 15 grams a day. Increase fiber intake slowly to allow your body to adjust to the change and prevent gas and cramping. Some tips to increase fiber include eating whole fruits instead of drinking fruit juices; choose cereals that have whole grain as their first ingredient, and substituting beans or legumes for meat two to three times a week in soups and stews.

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