

## STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING DIETARY FIBER INTAKE

### ***What is dietary fiber?***

The part of plant foods that your body cannot digest.

### ***Where is fiber found?***

Mainly in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (dried beans and peas), nuts and seeds.

### ***What can fiber do to help me?***

- ✓ Reduce high blood cholesterol
- ✓ Reduce high blood pressure
- ✓ Manage body weight
- ✓ Prevent constipation and relieve hemorrhoids
- ✓ Improve blood sugar control
- ✓ Reduce colon cancer risk

### ***How much fiber do I need each day?***

- ✓ Men: 30 to 38 grams
- ✓ Women: 21 to 25 grams

### ***How can I increase the fiber in my diet?***

- ✓ Eat at least 3 ounce-equivalents of whole grains per day, substituting *whole* grain products (i.e., bread, cereal, rice, pasta) for refined grains.
- ✓ Eat more fruits and vegetables – at least 2 cups of fruit and 2-1/2 cups of vegetables each day.
- ✓ Choose *whole* (fresh, frozen or dried) vegetables and fruits over juices, which have most of the fiber removed.
- ✓ Include legumes (i.e., dried beans and peas) with your meals regularly; increase your intake of these foods gradually to limit the gaseous side effects.
- ✓ Include nuts and seeds several times a week, which also contain monounsaturated fats and can help control blood cholesterol levels.
- ✓ Increase the amount of fiber in your diet gradually, using a variety of food sources. Try to include one fiber-rich food in every meal.
- ✓ Drink plenty of water to enhance fiber's effectiveness and to prevent constipation.

### ***What are some other ways to “sneak” fiber into my diet?***

- ✓ Sprinkle flax meal, wheat germ, nuts and/ or seeds onto cold or hot cereal, yogurt, cottage cheese or frozen yogurt.
- ✓ Sprinkle high fiber cereal (i.e., 100% bran) onto yogurt, fresh fruit, and frozen yogurt.
- ✓ Liven up high fiber cereal with fresh fruits such as bananas or berries, or with dried fruits such as raisins, cranberries or apricots.
- ✓ Substitute whole wheat flour, spelt flour or oat bran for at least 1/3 of the all-purpose flour in baked goods recipes.

- ✓ Serve entrees like steak, chicken or fish on a “bed” or grilled zucchini and peppers, sautéed spinach or kale, sautéed onions and mushrooms, or grated carrots and slivered beets.
- ✓ Order or make your own pizza with a whole wheat crust and with vegetable toppings such as spinach, tomatoes, broccoli, mushroom, onion, roasted red pepper and/or green pepper.
- ✓ Snack on oat bran pretzels, whole wheat crackers, air-popped popcorn, dry-roasted nuts or seeds, whole-grain cereal, fresh or dried fruit, baked tortilla chips dipped in fresh salsa, or raw vegetables dipped in hummus.
- ✓ Add frozen vegetables to soups, sauces, casseroles or pasta dishes.
- ✓ Try different types of whole grains for variety – like barley, kasha, bulgur, quinoa, wild rice, and couscous. Also try other pasta varieties – like whole wheat, brown rice or quinoa pastas.
- ✓ Choose bean soup over cream of broccoli soup, oat bran over instant cream of wheat, whole wheat bagel over croissant or white bagel, and baked potato (with skin) over French fries or mashed potatoes.

***Is it difficult to eat 21-38 grams of fiber in a day?***

- ✓ 1/2 cup baked beans = 11 grams
- ✓ 1/2 cup 100% bran ready-to-eat cereal = 8 grams
- ✓ 1 medium orange = 2 grams
- ✓ 1/2 cup cooked broccoli = 3 grams
- ✓ 1 medium pear = 5 grams
- ✓ 1 medium baked potato with skin = 5 grams
- ✓ **Grand total** = 34 grams fiber

**REFERENCES**

Hodges LS. *High Fiber Diet*. The Florida Medical Nutrition Therapy Manual 2005 Edition. Florida Dietetic Association, 2005.

Position of the American Dietetic Association: Health implications of dietary fiber. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2002;102:993-1000.

USDHHS and USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005. *Carbohydrates*. Web-site accessed April 3, 2006: <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter7.htm>.

Whitney EN, Cataldo CN, Rolfes SR. *Understanding Normal and Clinical Nutrition*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Brooks Cole; 2001.