

## Constipation

Constipation may be caused by many factors. These could include using certain medications (e.g. pain medications, sedatives and antidepressants), eating mostly soft or liquid foods which are low in fiber, and/or being less physically active. Try these ideas to help you manage constipation:

- It is important to drink at least 8 to 10 glasses of fluid a day. This will help soften your stool.
- If you are using medications that have made you constipated, you may need to limit your use of high fiber foods. These foods can make constipation worse for some people on medications. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you think that your medication is making you constipated.
- If you are not using medications that cause constipation, try using high fiber foods to help soften your stool. Use High Fiber Foods to help increase the fiber in your diet.
- Take a walk if you are up to it. Exercise helps to ease constipation.
- Bulk-forming laxatives such as Psyllium husks may be helpful. Please ensure to follow the mixing instructions.
- If none of these suggestions works for you, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about which medications may help to ease your constipation.

## High Fiber Foods for a High Fiber Diet

A product or a food item can be labeled "High Fiber" when it contains more than 5g of fiber per serving. Benefits of High Fiber foods include the prevention of constipation, lowering cholesterol and many more. Read Benefits of Fiber for more details.

### High Fiber Foods:

#### Grain Products:

- whole grain breads, buns, bagels, muffins
- Bran Flakes, All Bran, Red River cereal, Corn bran cereal, whole wheat Shreddies
- Brown rice, whole-grain pastas

#### Fruits:

- dried fruits (apricots, dates, prunes, raisins), blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, oranges

#### Vegetables:

- broccoli, dried peas and beans (e.g. kidney, lima, beans, chick peas, lentils and soy beans), corn

# Psyllium Husk for High Cholesterol

## What is Psyllium Husk?

Psyllium husk comes from the crushed seeds of the *Plantago ovata* plant, an herb native to parts of Asia, Mediterranean regions of Europe, and North Africa. The psyllium seed husks have been used in herbal remedies. Similar to oats and wheat, psyllium is rich in soluble fiber. Traditionally, psyllium husk is used as a gentle bulk-forming laxative for constipation.

## Psyllium Husk for High Cholesterol

Soluble fiber from psyllium husk forms a gel when mixed with liquid. The FDA approved a health claim:

**3g to 12g soluble fiber from psyllium seed husk when included as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease**

Studies have shown that psyllium husk is effective in lowering total cholesterol and LDL (the Bad cholesterol) levels. Studies also found that a 1% reduction in total and LDL cholesterol can reduce the risk of heart disease by up to 2%.

| Soluble Fiber                 |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Food Sources of Soluble Fiber | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oat/Oat bran</li> <li>• Dried beans and peas</li> <li>• Barley</li> <li>• Flax seed</li> <li>• Fruits such as oranges and apples</li> <li>• Vegetables such as carrots</li> <li>• Psyllium seed husks</li> </ul> |

## Other Benefits of Psyllium

Since psyllium husk is a type of fiber, it can alleviate constipation. In addition, recent studies also showed positive benefits of psyllium in IBD (Crohn's Disease and Colitis). Psyllium acts as prebiotics - aiding to heal the inner lining of the inflamed intestines.

**Psyllium Husk Key Message:** Psyllium is very rich in soluble fiber. Therefore, we only need to eat a small serving to contribute the soluble fiber to help achieve the cholesterol-lowering effect. Standard preparations of psyllium are available in dry seed or husk form, to be mixed with water as needed. You will also find them in capsules. Warning: In general, prescription

drugs should be taken one hour before or two hours after psyllium, because the absorption and effectiveness of many drugs may be reduced.

## Soluble Fiber vs Insoluble Fiber

### Benefits of Fiber

We all know the benefits of fiber! Fiber not only promotes health, it also help reduce the risk for some chronic diseases. For instance, fiber prevents constipation, hemorrhoids and diverticulosis. Fiber is also linked to prevent some cancers especially colon and breast cancer. In addition, fiber may help lower the LDL cholesterol (the Bad cholesterol) and the total cholesterol therefore reducing the risk of heart disease. Furthermore, fiber can help lower blood sugar therefore help better manage diabetes.

### Types of Fiber: Soluble Fiber and Insoluble Fiber

Both soluble and insoluble fiber are undigested. They are therefore not absorbed into the bloodstream. Instead of being used for energy, fiber is excreted from our bodies. Soluble fiber forms a gel when mixed with liquid, while insoluble fiber does not. Insoluble fiber passes through our intestines largely intact.

| Insoluble Fiber                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Functions of Insoluble Fiber    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• move bulk through the intestines</li> <li>• control and balance the pH (acidity) in the intestines</li> </ul>   |
| Benefits of Insoluble Fiber     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote regular bowel movement and prevent constipation</li> <li>• remove toxic waste through colon in less time</li> <li>• keep an optimal pH in intestines to prevent microbes from producing cancer substances; therefore preventing colon cancer</li> </ul> |
| Food Sources of Insoluble Fiber | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-wheat products</li> <li>• Wheat oat</li> <li>• Corn bran</li> <li>• Flax seed</li> <li>• Vegetables such as green beans, cauliflowers and potato skins</li> <li>• Fruit skins and root vegetable skins</li> </ul>   |

| Soluble Fiber                 |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Functions of Soluble Fiber    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bind with fatty acids</li> <li>• prolong stomach emptying time so that sugar is released and absorbed more slowly</li> </ul>   |
| Benefits of Soluble Fiber     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lower total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol (the Bad cholesterol) therefore reducing the risk of heart disease</li> <li>• regulate blood sugar for people with diabetes</li> </ul>                         |
| Food Sources of Soluble Fiber | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oat/Oat bran</li> <li>• Dried beans and peas</li> <li>• Barley</li> <li>• Flax seed</li> <li>• Fruits such as oranges and apples</li> <li>• Vegetables such as carrots</li> <li>• Psyllium husk</li> </ul> |
|                               |   |

**Key Message:** An average diet contains 75%:25% insoluble fiber: soluble fiber. When making a food choice decision, don't worry about choosing a specific type of fiber. Indeed many foods such as oat, oat brans, psyllium husk and flax seed are rich in both insoluble and soluble fiber. Eating enough fiber is more important!!! If you eat at least 5 servings of fruits/vegetables as well as at least 5 servings of grain products per day, you are very likely meeting the fiber requirements. You may also choose from these High Fiber Foods.

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