



Healthy Eating: Focus On *Fiber*

There are things in life that affect health that you can't control, such as family history, aging, and the air you breathe. But you do have control about food choices. What you choose to eat, and how much you eat, can have a serious impact on your quality of life.

Help yourself avoid chronic health conditions, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, by making healthy food choices. More importantly, eating healthy will give you more energy and help you feel better day to day.

You may find that healthy eating is easier than you thought and well worth the effort. Here is some helpful information to help you maintain a healthy diet.

What is Fiber?

Fiber is important for overall health. Fiber helps move the food you eat along your intestinal tract. Fiber helps your body get rid of harmful substances. This helps to keep your immune system healthy. Your immune system helps to fight infections.

Fiber is the "roughage" you eat that your body cannot digest or absorb. It cleans out the digestive system as it passes through. Food choices high in fiber will lower your risk of getting many cancers and digestive-related illnesses.

Fiber can help you:

- Manage your weight
- Control blood sugar levels
- Lower cholesterol levels
- Maintain healthy bowel function

Animal foods, such as milk and meat, contain no fiber. Plant foods, such as whole wheat products, fruits, vegetables and beans, are all very high in fiber.

Foods with Fiber Grains

Whole grains have more dietary fiber, iron, and vitamins than refined grains.

Benefits of whole grains:

- Control your weight, because they help to increase metabolism and make you feel fuller
- Lower your cholesterol levels, which also lowers your risk of getting heart disease, obesity and diabetes

Whole grains:

- Whole wheat flour
- Brown rice
- Oatmeal
- Whole grain bread

Refined grains (avoid or reduce your intake):

- White flour
- White bread
- White rice

Vegetables

Vegetables are an important part of a healthy meal plan. Vegetables give you vitamins and nutrients. Try to fill half of your dinner plate with vegetables and fruits. If using canned vegetables, use low salt vegetables or rinse them before using them.

Benefits of vegetables:

- Helps lower the risks for heart disease, diabetes, and obesity
- Provides vitamin A, which helps keep eyes and skin healthy
- Helps lower blood pressure
- Are low in fat and calories and they have no cholesterol

Fruits

Fruits also play a key role in a healthy meal plan. While fruits in any form help create a healthy meal plan, eating fruits whole or sliced offers more health benefits than fruits that are juiced or pureed. When fruits are pureed or juiced, they contain less fiber. Be sure to check the amount of sugar if using canned fruit.

Benefits of fruit:

- Helps lower the risks for heart disease, diabetes, and obesity
- Are rich in potassium, which helps lower blood pressure and keeps the bones strong
- Are low in calories and fat, which helps with weight management
- Are a source of many nutrients, such as vitamin C, folic acid, and dietary fiber

More Healthy Tips



Drink more water!

Adults and children take in an average of 400 calories in drinks, such as juice and soda, each day. Having enough water is important for your body. Avoiding the extra calories and sugar in other beverages helps with weight control.

Exercise regularly

It helps lower blood pressure and cholesterol. It also helps to manage your stress and weight.

A few ways to stay active:

- Go for a bike ride or a walk
- Attend a group exercise class with a friend
- Swim

Avoid “fad” diets

Diets that have you stop eating certain foods can cause a shortage of important nutrients. It is much healthier to have a well-balanced meal plan that includes a variety of foods.

Consult with your health care provider for advice before making any major food changes. Your health care provider will know your current health status. You will get advice on how to start a healthy diet, along with any precautions you may need to take.

Don't smoke or use tobacco products.

If you do, QUIT! Smoking leads to endless health problems. There is no room in a healthy lifestyle for smoking or using tobacco. If you want to quit, and want some help, download the Wellframe app. Use the access code **EXCELLUSFREE** for a self-guided program to help you quit. You can also call the National Quitline at **1-800-QUITNOW** (1-800-784-8669).

Get help from Member Care Management.

This team of professionals can help you with all your health needs including diet and nutrition. Call **1-877-222-1240** (TTY 711) or Email: **Case.Management@Excellus.com**, 8:00 AM- 5:00 PM EST Monday- Friday

