

# Fibre Facts for Pregnancy



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH

Constipation is a common problem during pregnancy because of the changes that take place in your body. You have more of the hormone progesterone in your body when you are pregnant. This hormone makes the muscles of your digestive tract relax, moving food along more slowly. Also, the use of iron supplements and the pressure from your uterus can slow the movement of food through your intestines. Slow-motion digestion gives your body more time to absorb the nutrients from your diet that you and your baby need, but unfortunately it can also cause constipation.

## Preventing constipation is as easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Eat lots of fibre
2. Drink plenty of water
3. Get regular exercise

The fibre from food creates bulkier, softer stools that pass through the body more quickly and easily. Since water is excreted along with fibre it is important to drink plenty of water or other fluids to prevent dehydration and avoid hard, dry stools. Exercise helps by maintaining your muscle tone.

## Fibre boosters

Try these ideas to help increase the fibre in your diet. As an added benefit, most high fibre foods are rich in vitamins and minerals.

- Choose whole grain breads, brown rice and whole wheat pasta. Choose products that list a whole grain flour first on the label, such as whole wheat, oat or rye flour
- Choose ready-to-eat cereals made from bran and whole grains
- Rolled oats, oat bran and whole grains are the best cooked cereal choices
- Choose raw fruits and vegetables, and eat the peels whenever possible. Enjoy a variety of salads

- Aim for 7–8 Food Guide Servings of vegetables and fruit each day
- Choose fruit for snacks and desserts. Fruits have more fibre than juices
- Eat beans, lentils or dried peas more often
- Sprinkle wheat bran or high-fibre bran cereal over cereal or add to muffins, cookies or meatloaf
- Try low fat, high fibre cookies such as sultanas or fig bars. Make your own oatmeal and raisin cookies at home

## Where does fibre come from?

Experts recommend that we eat 25–30 grams of fibre each day. Since most of us only eat around 15 grams per day, we need to double the amount we are eating now. The following table gives you an idea of the amount of fibre in breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Meats and dairy products are not listed because they don't contain any fibre.

It is best to get fibre from food, rather than supplements. Add fibre slowly to your diet, so you don't get cramps. If gas is a problem, avoid foods that sometimes cause gas, like cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and legumes. Add them back slowly to find out how much you can handle.



Serving	Breads & Cereals	Grams of fibre
¾ cup	“all bran” cereals	19.8
¾ cup	Bran flake cereals	3.4
¾ cup	Shreddies	2.8
1 biscuit	Shredded Wheat	2.4
¾ cup	Cooked brown rice	1.5
1 slice	100% whole wheat bread	1.4
½ cup	Cooked oatmeal	1.1
1 cup	Cooked macaroni	1.2
¾ cup	Cooked white rice	.4
1 slice	White bread	.4

Serving	Fruits	Grams of fibre
10	Prunes	10.0
½ cup	Raisins, seedless	7.6
½ cup	Dates, pitted and chopped	7.2
½ cup	Dried apricots, uncooked	5.6
1	Pear	4.7
1	Apple	3.5
½ cup	Raspberries	3.3
1	Orange (medium)	2.6
1	banana	2.4
½ cup	Blueberries	2.1

Serving	Vegetables	Grams of fibre
½ cup	Mashed sweet potato	4.2
½ cup	Broccoli	2.7
½ cup	Turnip, mashed	2.7
½ cup	Brussel sprouts	2.5
½ cup	Carrots	2.5
½ cup	Corn	2.4
½ cup	Stewed tomatoes	2.0

Serving	Legumes	Grams of fibre
1 cup	Baked beans, canned	20.7
1 cup	Kidney beans, cooked	16.5
1 cup	Lima beans, cooked	9.0
1 cup	White beans, cooked	8.3
½ cup	Peanuts	6.2
½ cup	Almonds, whole	5.4
1 cup	Split peas, cooked	4.8

*Adapted from Brant County Health Unit*

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