Fiber is the part of plant foods that the body can not digest. Eating more fiber can help your child prevent constipation, diabetes, and heart disease. Foods that contain a lot of fiber are filling, have lots of vitamins and minerals, and help children maintain a healthy weight.

Fiber should be added very gradually to give the body time to adjust. Drinking plenty of fluids helps fiber do its work.

**How much fiber is enough?**

You can find out how much fiber is in food by looking for the “dietary fiber” line on food labels. A simple rule of thumb: children ages 3-15 should aim for “age plus 5 grams” of fiber. For example, an 8-year-old should eat 8 plus 5 = 13 grams of fiber a day. Older teens should eat 20-35 grams of fiber a day.

**Here are some easy ways to add fiber:**

- Serve high-fiber cereal for breakfast, like bran flakes, oatmeal, or shredded wheat
- Add some raisins or a banana to breakfast cereal
- Serve whole fruit instead of juices
- Add a salad to lunch or dinner
- Eat apples, pears, and potatoes with the peels on
- Add beans (like kidney or navy beans) to salads and soups or eat baked beans as a side dish
- Popcorn makes a great high-fiber snack
- Fill 3/4 of the lunch or dinner plate with plant-based foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains

© 2008 Nutrition Works, LLC