



KIDS AND FIBER

It's important to teach children early how to develop healthy eating habits. Children as young as two years old should eat a diet rich in foods such as breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables. These foods provide essential vitamins and minerals, carbohydrates for energy and **fiber**. Fiber may reduce the risk of developing heart disease and some types of cancer later in life.

Dietary fiber is the part of the plant fiber that we eat as food. It is found only in plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables and grains. Fiber, such as wheat bran, helps maintain regularity. Fiber also provides a feeling of fullness and satisfaction in a meal. High fiber foods are generally low in fat. Some forms of fiber, such as oat bran and pectin, help lower blood cholesterol levels.

Starting your child's day with a breakfast of cereal or bran waffles, yogurt and sliced fresh fruit and a glass of orange juice or low-fat milk, can provide up to **6 grams of fiber**. As well, your child will get the protein, carbohydrate, fat and important vitamins and minerals needed for growth.

For children between the ages of 3 and 18, adding 5 to the child's age is an easy formula for determining **daily fiber needs**. For example, a five-year old would need 10 grams of fiber because $5+5=10$. Children need more fiber as they grow; however, be cautious about adding too much fiber because it may leave them with little appetite for other foods needed for a healthy diet.

Anyone adding **fiber** to the diet should drink extra liquids, such as water, juice or milk, to maintain regular digestion.

FIBER-CONTAINING FOODS (CHILD-SIZED PORTIONS)		
Food	Serving Size	Fiber (grams)
Raisin bran cereal	1 cup	7
Whole wheat biscuit	1 cup	6
Bran waffle	2 rounds	4
Oatmeal	1 cup	4
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	2
Bran muffin	1 small	2
Fruit-filled cereal bar	1	2
Broccoli	½ cup	2
Carrots	½ cup	2
Corn	½ cup	2
Peas	½ cup	4
Apple with peel	1 medium	3
Banana	½ medium	1
Orange	1 small	2
Raisins	¼ cup	2

References

- ADA. *Kids and Fiber*, 1998
- Kellogg Co. *What You Need to Know About Fiber*, 1995.

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