

## **What's all the fuss about fiber?**

Fiber is in these days and for a very good reason. Its what a natural diet has plenty of. Its what most Americans have not enough of.

Here is some more information about fiber so you can begin to pay more attention to it and increase the amounts you are getting each day.

Fiber comes in two forms: Soluble and insoluble.

Apple skin = insoluble. It is non digestible, has no food value or calories but it adds bulk to the stool. These insoluble fibers fill with water and thereby keep the stool hydrated and soft. This fiber also acts as mass so the waves of peristalsis in the intestines then have something to force along. Insoluble fiber is found in seeds, whole grains, nuts, and vegetables like broccoli, celery, and zucchini and fruits with edible skins like apples, pears, etc.

Apple pulp = soluble. This is pectin that is a soluble fiber. Soluble fibers are not coarse like insoluble one, but form a gel like substance in the intestine. Soluble fiber has a number of important purposes:

It is a prebiotic. Prebiotics are non digestible foods that stimulate the growth of beneficial bacteria in the large intestine. When eaten and metabolized by the good bacteria they produce substances (short chain fatty acids) that are thought to have anti-cancer, antimicrobial, cholesterol lowering, and blood sugar regulating effects. They may also improve mineral absorption and prevent osteoporosis. Foods high in prebiotics are soybeans , Jerusalem artichokes , raw oats , unrefined whole wheat and barley . Interestingly, breast milk has prebiotics that play an important role in the development of a healthy immune system in infants.

Fiber Facts: • Slows the digestion of sugars so that your blood sugar does not increase too high or too rapidly. • Keeps the bowels moving. • Scrubs the inside of the colon. • Has no calories and makes you feel full. • Low fiber intake is a risk factor for heart disease, colon cancer, diverticular disease, constipation and hemorrhoids. • Those eating 29 or more grams of fiber per day had 40% reduced risk of heart disease than those eating 12 grams or less. The average American diet is only about 10 grams of fiber per day. • One cup of bran cereal or one cup of beans = 10 grams of fiber. • Oatmeal, apples (with peels), corn, bran muffins, brown rice, popcorn, and oranges are good sources of fiber. All whole grains, fruits, and vegetables are good sources of fiber. Eat lots of them! One should be getting at least 30 grams a day of total fiber.