

# Healthy Eats for a Healthy Beat: Focus on Fiber

## **Benefits of a High-Fiber Diet**

**Fiber normalizes bowel movements** by adding bulk to the stool which will make it easier to pass.

**It helps maintain bowel health** and improves gut flora.

**In addition to lowering cholesterol**, fiber can also help reduce blood pressure and inflammation.

**In people with diabetes, fiber** — particularly soluble fiber — can slow the absorption of sugar and help improve blood sugar levels making it a heart-healthy addition to our meals.

**High-fiber foods tend to be more filling** than low-fiber foods, so you're likely to eat less and stay satisfied longer, helping you achieve a healthy weight.



### **Make Fiber your Target Each Day**

Aim for 6-8 grams of fiber per meal and 3-4 grams per snack.

Based on your age and gender, how many grams do you need?

|       | Age 50 or younger | Age 51 or older  |
|-------|-------------------|------------------|
| Men   | 38 grams per day  | 30 grams per day |
| Women | 25 grams per day  | 21 grams per day |

## **3 Easy Ways to Boost Fiber in your Diet**

1. Snacks are meant to be small amounts of food that tide you over until your next meal. Make your snacks count by incorporating more fruits and vegetables. Not only will they keep you feeling full longer, they also add important phytochemicals for all of your body's needs.
2. Make your meals more wholesome with whole grains. Even people on a gluten-free diet can have their grains and eat them, too! Quinoa, bulgur wheat, and oats are easy to make plus they'll provide five or more grams of fiber per cup. White rice has less than two grams of fiber per cup.
3. Get a leg up with legumes. On average, beans provide 7 or more grams of total dietary fiber per  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. They really are the magical fruit! Peas and lentils also pack a punch with 8 grams per  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. Include more of these budget-friendly foods throughout the week which can help reduce your disease risk. Legumes are among the best foods in terms of amount of nutrients per unit price.



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



## Black Bean Blueberry Smoothie

### Ingredients

- 1 cup non-fat vanilla Greek yogurt
- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- 1 medium banana
- ½ cup canned reduced sodium black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 tablespoons honey

### Directions

1. Wash hands, then combine yogurt, blueberries, banana, black beans, and honey in a blender. Blend until smooth.
2. Pour into glasses and enjoy!



*Nutrition Information: Makes 2 servings. Calories Per Serving 315; Total Fat 1 g; Sodium 130 mg; Carbohydrate 65 g; Fiber 7 g; Sugars 45 g; Protein 14 g; Calcium 120 mg; Iron 1.7 mg; Potassium 560*  
*Source: Northarvest Bean Growers Association*

## Black Bean Burger

### Ingredients

- 1 (20-oz.) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- ¾ tsp. minced garlic
- 1 ¼ tsp. chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 1/3 c. plain bread crumbs

### Directions

1. Wash hands, then mash beans in a large bowl.
2. Mix in garlic, chili powder, salt, pepper and egg.
3. Stir in bread crumbs.
4. Shape into four patties; you can refrigerate them if they are not very firm (up to one day ahead).
5. Spray skillet with nonstick spray and heat on medium heat. Add the burgers and cook uncovered until hot.
6. If storing for later, allow to cool, then freeze on a baking sheet for an hour or until frozen. Transfer to a freezer bag.
7. When ready to use defrost and cook in a skillet.



*Nutrition Information: Makes four servings. Each serving has 180 calories, 2 g fat, 11 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 9 g fiber and 270 mg sodium.*

*Source: North Dakota State University Extension*

## References:

- Slavin, J. Fiber and prebiotics: mechanisms and health benefits. *Nutrients*. April 2013. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3705355/>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025*. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/).
- North Dakota State University Extension. (2013). *All About Beans*. Garden-Robinson, J and McNeal, K: Authors.
- Dietary Fiber: Essential for a healthy diet. Mayo Clinic. Retrieved March 1, 2021. [www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/fiber/art-20043983](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/fiber/art-20043983)
- North Dakota State University Extension. (2012). *Pulses: The Perfect Food*. Garden-Robinson, J: Author.

### Created by:

Kristin Bogdonas, MPH, University of Illinois Extension, Nutrition & Wellness Educator  
*Serving Henry, Mercer, Rock Island and Stark counties*

*March 2021*