

Adding Fiber to Your Child's Diet

Why does my child need fiber?

At the Colorectal and Pelvic Center at Children's Health, we sometimes suggest adding fiber to your child's diet. Fiber helps add bulk to poop and makes it easier to pass. When taken with enough fluids, it can help with constipation (hard poop).

What are the different types of fiber?

There are 2 main types of fiber: soluble and insoluble. Many plant foods have both types. Each type works differently.

- Soluble fiber. This type of fiber dissolves (mixes well) in water and forms a thick gel in the gut. It is found in foods such as oats, beans, apples, and citrus fruits (oranges and grapefruit). It helps:
 - Slow down digestion
 - Lower cholesterol
 - Improve blood sugar levels
- Insoluble fiber. This type of fiber does not dissolve in water. It adds bulk to poop. It is found in whole grains, nuts, seeds, and vegetables such as carrots and broccoli. It helps:
 - Move food through the intestines
 - Prevent constipation
 - With regular pooping

How should I add more fiber to my child's diet?

Start adding fiber slowly over 1–2 weeks. Fiber can cause some gas, bloating or belly pain at first. As you slowly give your child more fiber, their body gets used to it.

Have your child drink plenty of fluids every day. When your child eats more fiber, drinking fluids helps keep poop soft. Water is best.

What are some foods with high fiber?

The foods with the most fiber are in **bold**.

Grains	Fruits and Vegetables	Proteins
• Barley • Brown rice • Granola • High fiber cereal • Oat bran • Oatmeal • Popcorn • Quinoa • Whole-grain pasta • Whole-grain bread	• Apple • Apricot • Artichoke • Avocado • Beets • Blackberries • Blueberries • Broccoli • Brussel sprouts • Cabbage	• Almonds • Beans • Chestnuts • Chia seeds • Chickpeas • Coconut • Edamame • Flax seeds • Green peas • Hazelnuts

• Whole-grain crackers	• Carrots • Canned pumpkin • Cauliflower • Fig, dried or fresh • Grapefruit • Green beans • Green peas • Guava • Kale • Kiwi • Okra • Orange • Parsnips • Passionfruit • Pear • Potato with skin • Prunes • Raspberries • Strawberry • Squash • Sweet potato	• Lentils • Macadamia nuts • Peanuts • Pine nuts • Pistachios • Pumpkin seeds • Sunflower seeds
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What are some tips for adding fiber?

There are many ways to add fiber to your child's foods. Here are some simple tips:

- Add high-fiber foods to lower fiber ones. For example, sprinkle ground flax or chia seeds into yogurt or pasta dishes. Add a few tablespoons of bran to breakfast cereal.
- Use whole wheat flour or add flaxseed, chia or berries when making banana bread, muffins, pancakes, or waffles.
- Replace at least half of the white flour with oat or barley flour when baking.
- Add oats or oat bran to muffins and cookies.
- Blend chia seeds with fruit when making a smoothie.
- Make oatmeal for breakfast.
- Offer fruit, vegetables, hummus, or bean dip for snacks.
- When making chili, replace the ground beef with lentils.
- Try cooked barley instead of rice or pasta.
- Choose whole-grain bread, rice, and pasta instead of white versions.
- Make sweet potatoes or squash for a side dish.
- Offer whole-grain brown rice.
- Add lentils, black beans, or chickpeas to soups, salads, or pasta dishes.