

*The Might Moose Club Nutrition Newsletter*

*February Focus on Fiber!*



**Defining Fiber**

Dietary fiber is a type of carbohydrate and the plant material that our bodies cannot fully digest or absorb. The only food sources of fiber are plants. Vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans are all excellent sources of fiber.

**Different Types, Different Roles**

There are two different types of fiber, commonly classified as soluble or insoluble. Both types of fiber contribute to health and wellness in a number of ways.

- **Soluble dietary fiber**- this type of fiber dissolves in water to form a gel-like material. Soluble fiber can interfere with the absorption of dietary fat and cholesterol. This, in turn, can help lower LDL or ("bad") cholesterol levels in the blood. Soluble fiber can also slow digestion and the rate at which carbohydrates and other nutrients are absorbed into the bloodstream. This can help control the level of blood glucose by preventing rapid rises in blood sugar following a meal or snack.
- **Insoluble dietary fiber**- this type of fiber does *not* dissolve in water. Insoluble fiber can speed up the movement of food and waste through the digestive system, promoting regularity and helping to prevent constipation.
- Both **soluble and insoluble dietary fiber** can make you feel full, which may lower your calorie intake by helping you eat less and yet stay satisfied longer.

Long-term, inadequate fiber intake can have a negative impact on general health and the immune system. A diet low in fiber is associated with an increased risk for many health conditions and diseases.

## ***How Much Is Enough?***

***Daily fiber recommendations based on USDA's 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.***

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Age	Male grams/day	Female grams/day
4-8 years	20	17
9-13 years	25	22
14-18 years	31	25
19-30 years	34	28
31-50 years	31	25
51+ years	28	22

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### ***Some tips for increasing your child's daily fiber intake:***

- Puree berries in a blender and pour them into Popsicle molds. Freeze for a few hours and serve as dessert!
- Cut a variety of fruits or vegetables into different shapes and serve with a light dip such as Greek yogurt, peanut butter, or salsa. Make sure to leave the skins on for extra fiber.
- Make your own trail mix using your child's favorites. Include a variety of nuts, seeds, and dried fruit.
- Introduce your child to whole grains slowly. Low-fat, air-popped popcorn and whole grain cereals are a great place to start!
- Gradually begin to replace white rice, bread, and pasta with minimally processed brown rice and other whole grains like barley, millet, amaranth, and faro.
- Try adding high-fiber foods to current meals: 1-2 tablespoons of almonds, ground flaxseeds, or chia seeds to cereals; diced vegetables to casseroles, stir-fried dishes, and soups.
- For breakfast, choose cereals that have a whole grain as their first ingredient. Another tip is to look on the Nutrition Facts label and choose cereals with 20% or higher of the Daily Value (DV) for fiber.

### ***Important to Note***

When increasing fiber, be sure to do it gradually and with plenty of fluids. As dietary fiber travels through the digestive tract, is similar to a new sponge; it needs water to plump up and pass smoothly. If you consume more than your usual intake of fiber but not enough fluid, you may experience nausea or constipation.

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If you have concerns about your child's nutrition feel free to email the dietitian at [dlombardi@usj.edu](mailto:dlombardi@usj.edu)

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## February Featured Food: Lentils



### **Nutrition Overview**

Lentils are edible seeds of the legume family and come in a variety of colors including red, green, brown, yellow and black. They are high in fiber, and complex carbohydrates, while low in fat and calories.

### **Protein**

When lentils are combined with a whole grain they provide the same quality protein as meat. A ½ cup serving of cooked lentils provides about 12 grams of protein.

### **Fiber**

Just ½ cup of cooked green lentils packs in 32% of your days' worth of fiber!

### **Potassium**

Just ½ cup of cooked split red lentils has 273 mg of potassium! Potassium can counteract the damaging effect of sodium and has been shown to lower blood pressure.

### **Folate**

Out of all plant-based foods, lentils contain the most folate! Folate is a type of B-vitamin which helps support red blood cell formation and proper nerve functions. Folate also plays an important role in lowering artery-damaging homocysteine.

### **Iron**

Just ½ cup of cooked lentils provides 15% of your daily iron needs! Iron plays an integral role in carrying oxygen to cells.

Lentils are a very good source of manganese. This mineral is stored mainly in our bones and in major organs. Manganese plays a role in maintaining normal blood sugar level, and helps protect against free-radical damage.

**Check out some of these kid-friendly lentil recipes!**

<https://www.myfussy eater.com/kid-approved-lentil-recipes/>

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/kids-lentil-recipes>

<https://www.sarahremmer.com/my-top-5-favourite-kid-friendly-lentil-recipes-and-highlights-of-my-lentils-tour/>

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