



## Your Food Matters

with Sarah Clarke  
Natural Earth Health Products

### FIBRE... THE WHAT AND THE WHY?

We often hear about the importance and fuss over fibre for our marvellous machines... but what is it and why the fuss?

You may hear fibre referred to as bulk or roughage. Call it what you want, fibre is an important part of a healthy diet and can have many health benefits. It is said to help prevent heart disease, weight gain and some cancers as well as improving digestive health. It can also have a positive impact on cholesterol absorption and assists in the modulation of blood glucose in the treatment and prevention of type two diabetes.

The difference can be seen between the two categories that fibre is divided into - soluble and insoluble. Each type of fibre helps your body in different ways, so it's important to eat a variety of fibre-containing foods.

- Soluble fibre can be digested by your body. It dissolves in water to form a gel-like substance. Sources of soluble fibre are oats, legumes (beans and peas), root vegetables, apples, bananas, berries, barley, and psyllium. It is helpful in providing fuel for bacteria and encouraging healthy microflora in the gut.
- Insoluble fibre can't be digested. It passes through your gut without being broken down. Insoluble fibre helps keep your bowels healthy. It increases the movement of material through your digestive tract and increases your stool bulk. It helps to prevent and treat constipation. Sources of insoluble fibre are whole-wheat foods, bran, nuts, seeds, and the skin of some fruits and vegetables. It's important to increase the intake of water with a diet high in insoluble fibre, or it can have the opposite effect and actually cause constipation - and you don't want that!

Did you know that by adding fibre to any meal you lower the GI of your meal? You also gain greater satiety - feeling fuller for longer.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that adults should eat at least five serves of vegetables per day and two serves of fruit. Do you think we pass? In 2007-08, more than 90 per cent of Australian adults did not eat enough vegetables and almost 50 per cent did not eat enough fruit. For this indicator, daily fruit and vegetable consumption is used to estimate fibre intake. Perhaps if more people understood the health benefits and potential protective advantages of adding more fibre into their daily diets, more people would do it.

Keeping the bowels moving regularly is so important for our bodies. I once heard someone describe your digestive tract as a railway line with trains passing along regularly. If a train misses a scheduled stop, passengers cannot get on or off as they intended. Meetings may be missed, friends and families don't get to see each other, parcels are not delivered... The journey food takes along our digestive tracts does not contain any stages that can be skipped without detrimental effects. So bulk up, push on and don't hold back! **M**

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Clarke is the Managing Director of Natural Earth Health Products. Keen to help others set up a 'real food' culture in their own homes, she operates a multi-faceted business that produces 'real food' based products that nourish, cleanse and energise the body.

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