

Fibre and Your Renal Diet ~ Preventing Constipation ~

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre is the part of plant food that is not digested. Fibre is found in plant foods such as fruits, vegetables and grains. Fibre gives bulk to a bowel movement making the stool easier to pass.



Why is fibre important?

Fibre helps regulate the digestive system naturally and protects from chronic constipation. Constipation is a change in a person's bowel pattern from the usual. Constipation is caused by lack of fibre and fluids in the diet, lack of physical activity and some medications.

Fibre from your diet is important in maintaining good health. It is recommended that adults should eat 25 to 35 grams of fibre a day. On average, Canadians eat about 15 grams of dietary fibre daily.

If you are on peritoneal dialysis, the peritoneal tube works better when you have bowel movements regularly. You should avoid being constipated.

Why is it hard to get enough fibre in your renal diet?

It is hard to get enough fibre in your renal diet for many reasons:

- You have potassium restricted in your diet. Some fruits and vegetables that are high in potassium are also high in fibre. You may have to avoid them or limit them.
- You have phosphorus restricted in your diet. Since high fibre may be high in phosphorus, you may have to avoid or limit wholegrain breads and bran cereals.
- You have restricted fluids. Healthy people can drink as much fluid as they want. On dialysis, you can only drink the amount of water and other liquids as prescribed on your meal plan. This is based on how much urine your kidney makes.

Why is it hard to get enough fibre in your renal diet?

You may also take medications that may cause problems.
For example:

- phosphorus-binding medication called calcium carbonate can constipate if you take several pills every day
- iron medication such as ferrous gluconate, taken to improve hemoglobin, can also cause constipation

How do you get enough fibre on a renal diet?

The following information can help you increase fibre in your diet. Fruits and vegetables on your allowed list are divided into groups based on how much fibre they contain. Try to choose the ones with a higher fibre content more often.

You should increase the fibre in your diet gradually. This gives your bowel time to adjust to each level of increase before you move up higher.

Almost all patients on dialysis take laxatives and stool softeners to promote regularity and prevent constipation.

Medications that help constipation:

When it is hard to get enough fibre in your diet, you may need to take medication to prevent constipation. Stool softeners and bulk laxatives help stools hold water and stay soft to have a bowel movement without straining. Some examples are:

- Colace
- Lactulose
- Dulcolax or Bisacodyl
- Senekot

Psyllium or Metamucil is not recommended for patients on dialysis since it has to be taken with large amounts of fluid to work well.

Fibre Content of Some Common Foods

About 2 grams of fibre for each serving	
applesauce	½ cup
beets	½ cup
cabbage	½ cup
green beans	½ cup
mango	½ medium
oatmeal - cooked	½ cup
passion fruit	1 medium
peach	1 med.
pear	½ cup
plums	2 medium
prunes	3
sweet pepper	1 cup
strawberries	½ cup
tangerine	1 medium
water chestnuts	½ cup

About 2.5 grams of fibre for each serving	
apple with skin	1
broccoli	½ cup
carrots	½ cup
corn	½ cup
♥ kiwi	1
pear with skin	½ medium
popcorn air popped	2 cups
rhubarb, cooked	½ cup
About 3.2 to 4.0 grams of fibre for each serving	
blackberries	½ cup
blueberries	1 cup
bran cereal - some (read label)	½ cup
bulgar wheat - cooked	½ cup
peas	½ cup
raspberries	½ cup
shredded wheat cereal	1 biscuit

♥ Kiwi is also high in potassium and can affect the heart.

Note: ½ cup = 120 ml, 1 cup = 240 ml, 2 cups = 480 ml

Helpful hints:

Ask your dietitian to help you learn how to increase fibre in your diet.

Try sprinkling natural baking bran on your cold cereal or add it to hot cereal when cooking. Start with 1 tablespoon (15 ml) and increase to 2 tablespoons (30 ml) when your bowel gets used to this.

You should have your blood checked on a regular basis to see how an increase in fibre affects your potassium and phosphorus levels.

You may be tired from low hemoglobin or from dialysis treatments. Exercise also improves muscle tone and helps prevent constipation.

You can make the **Bowel Recipe** below that combines applesauce, prune juice and All Bran cereal. Start with 1 tablespoon (15 ml) a day and increase to 2 tablespoons (30 ml) a day. It may take some time to find the amount that helps you stay regular.

Bowel recipe:

- 2 cups (500 ml) of All Bran cereal. Do not use natural baking bran.
- 1 cup (250 ml) of applesauce
- ½ cup (125 ml) prune juice

1. Mix ingredients in a bowl and let sit for 10 minutes.
2. Mix ingredients together again.
3. Keep in the refrigerator in a closed container for up to 2 weeks.
4. Start with 1 tablespoon (15 ml) a day and increase to 2 tablespoons (30 ml) a day. It may take some time to find the amount that helps you stay regular.

