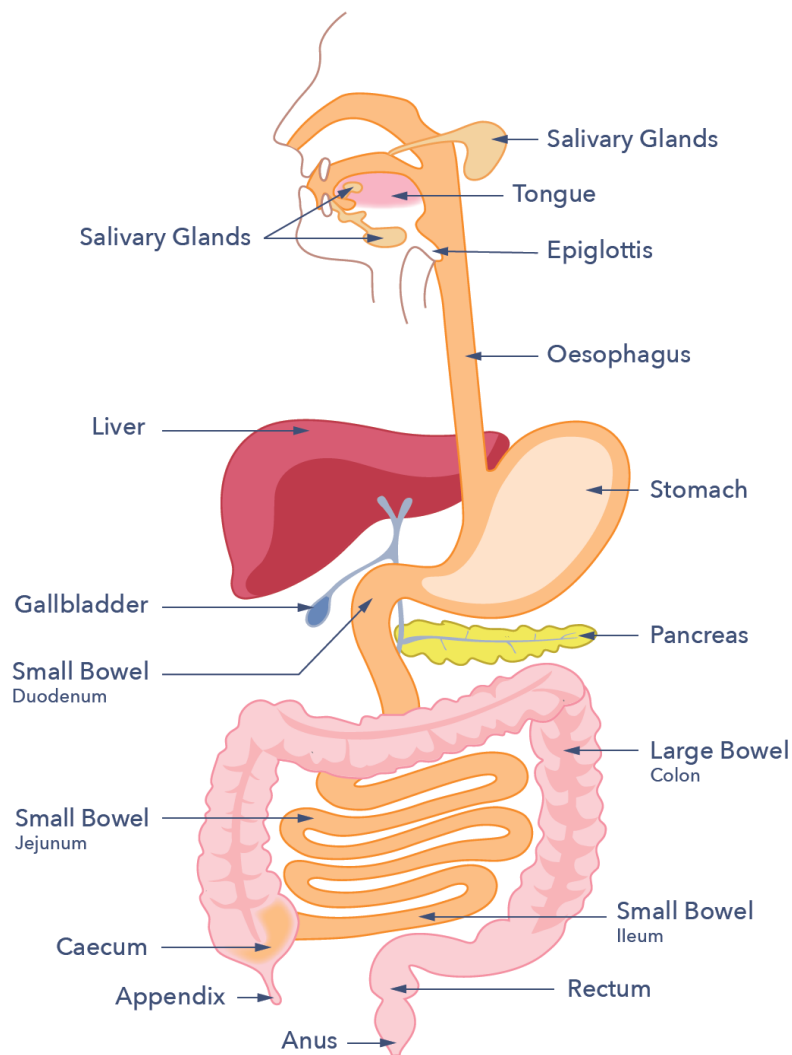




## How to increase your fibre intake.

Guts UK is the charity for the digestive system. Funding research to fight diseases of the gut, liver and pancreas.

### THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM



# How to increase your fibre intake

## ARE YOU EATING ENOUGH FIBRE?

At Guts UK we're all in favour of prevention. Fibre is the indigestible parts of foods based on plants that does not get absorbed into our body. Fibre is vital for gut health and can help to prevent constipation (by decreasing transit time), colon and rectal cancer (bowel cancer). Many people in the UK don't eat enough fibre. The current advice from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition is to include at least 30g of fibre in the diet per day - but for adults between the ages of 19 and 64 the average intake is 19g per day. It is slightly less for people who are over 65 years of age at 17.5g per day.

*Please note: when adding fibre to your diet, you may need to add your fluid / water intake. Water is important in moving fibre through the digestive system and avoiding constipation. It is **recommended** you drink around 8 cups of fluid a day.*

Every additional 7 g of fibre in the daily diet reduces the risk of common chronic diseases, for example, an eight percent reduction in colon cancer, nine per cent reduction in cardiovascular disease and heart attacks, a seven percent reduction in strokes and 6% reduction in the incidence of type two diabetes. Therefore, across the UK population there is a need to increase intake by a third - an additional 10g per day. We should consider lifestyle changes before prescribing laxatives because of the additional benefits increases in fibre provides such as the micronutrients contained in fruit and vegetables to reduce the risks of developing long term conditions.

We also know that having a good intake of fibre benefits the gut microbiome by increasing the amounts of beneficial species such as lactobacillus and bifidobacteria. Our microbiome is part of us, and we are still learning about the implications of changes to the microbiome in many diseases. It appears that we have a 'gut garden' as part of our personal ecosystem, and it makes absolute sense to feed it well.

The image below is the **Eatwell Guide**, it consists of the proportions of food groups that should be eaten in the diet by the general population in the UK - shall we have a look at where fibre is found in each group?



## STARCHY CARBOHYDRATES (YELLOW)

Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates; choosing wholegrain versions, where possible. These cereal foods contain a good degree of 'bulk' of fibre in the diet and have been specifically shown to be protective against colon cancer. We should include a portion of fibre containing starchy food at each meal.

## FRUIT AND VEGETABLES (GREEN)

The advice is to eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables per day. Most people have heard of the health message 'five a day'. Whilst the trend in fruit and vegetable intake has increased in the UK over the last 9 years, many people still don't consume enough. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey reports that 31% of adults between 19 and 65 years of age reach their five per day target. The UK the average intake is 4.2 portions (80g) per day - suggesting some people are well below achieving what they need.

## **PROTEIN (PINK)**

Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including 2 portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily.) The main source of fibre in this food group is pulses (chickpeas, lentils, peas and beans,) nuts and seeds, and these foods are also a good source of iron for vegetarians and vegans.

## **DAIRY (BLUE)**

Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (for example soya, nut or oat milk containing added calcium); choosing lower fat and lower sugar options. Cheese and yoghurts containing 'added fibre' or dried fruits and nuts do contain a source of fibre, but it is unlikely that fibre containing dairy foods will form a significant amount of fibre in the diet as the levels of intake can be proportionally lower.

## **FATS, OILS AND SPREADS (PURPLE)**

Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts. This group doesn't usually contain any fibre.

*If you're increasing your fibre intake, make sure to drink more fluid throughout the day too!*

[www.gutscharity.org.uk](http://www.gutscharity.org.uk)