

Guide to Fibre After Surgery or Gut Flare

This guide will help you eat more food with fibre over time.

This can be helpful after bowel surgery, a flare of inflammatory bowel disease, diverticulitis, or other gut-related health conditions.



If you have been told you are at risk of bowel obstruction or have Crohn's stricturing disease, step 3 of this guide may not be for you.

Talk to your dietitian or healthcare team and visit ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts for information on these health conditions.

What is fibre?

Fibre is a part of plant foods that your body does not digest (break down). Fibre is found in:

- grains
- legumes (beans, split peas, and lentils)
- nuts and seeds
- vegetables and fruits

Fibre is important for health and can help prevent some chronic diseases. It also helps make hard poop softer and easier to pass. It can also make loose poop more formed.

How much fibre do I need?

Age or group	Male (grams per day)	Female (grams per day)
1–3 years	19	19
4–8 years	25	25
9–13 years	31	26
14–50 years	38	25–26
51+ years	30	21
Pregnancy or lactation	–	28–29

Fibre supplements

There are different types of fibre supplements. Some can be helpful with certain health conditions, while others may not be.

Talk to your healthcare team before starting a fibre supplement.

How to use this guide

Your dietitian and healthcare team can help you choose the right step to start.

There are 3 steps:

1. Lower fibre foods (less than 2 g)
2. Medium fibre foods (2–4 g)
3. Higher fibre foods (more than 4 g)

These steps are based on how many grams of fibre are in a serving of each food.

With each step, start with a small amount of food from the “Foods to choose” list.

This gives your body time to adjust to the increase in fibre. It can also help reduce gut symptoms like gas, bloating, and cramping.

Everybody is different. Move through the stages how you feel most comfortable.

See pages 3 and 4 for foods to choose or avoid for each step.

Notes from my healthcare team:

To learn more about fibre, protein, or to find recipes and meal ideas, visit ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts.

Tips to try

The tips below may help you while you follow this guide.

- Eat 5–6 smaller meals throughout the day rather than 3 large ones.
- **Chew your food well at each step.** This will help digest your food.
- Drink enough fluids daily. Fibre absorbs fluid in your gut, which helps keep poop soft and easy to pass.
 - Fluids include: water, milk, plant-based beverages like soy, tea, coffee, smoothies, and broth.

Age	Fluid per day
Children 2–8 years old	4–5 cups (0.9–1.2 L)
Children 9–13 years old	6–7 cups (1.6–1.8 L)
Children 14–18 years old	7–10 cups (1.8–2.6 L)
Adults 19–64 years old	9–12 cups (2.25–3 L)
Older Adults 65+ years old	6–8 cups (1.5–2 L)

- Try to eat a variety of foods at each step. This can help you get the nutrients your body needs.
 - If you're new to cooking, check out [Health Canada's Cooking Skills](#).
 - Add herbs, spices, citrus juice, or condiments for a different taste.
- Changing the texture of a food can make it easier to tolerate in earlier steps, even if the food is higher in fibre.
 - Blending, pureeing, mashing, or cooking until soft can make the fibre easier to digest.
 - Try:
 - adding pureed lentils into pasta sauce
 - blending white beans into a smoothie
 - cooking vegetables in soup with chicken and rice

Read food labels

Read food labels to learn how much fibre is in 1 serving of that food.

The Nutrition Facts table example below is from the Oven Cooked Eggs recipe ([ahs.ca/Recipes](https://www.ahs.ca/Recipes)).

Nutrition Facts	
Per 1/6 recipe (2 eggs)	
Calories 143	% Daily Value*
Fat 9.5 g	12 %
Saturated 3.1 g	16 %
+Trans 0 g	
Carbohydrate 2 g	
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 0.4 g	0 %
Protein 13 g	
Cholesterol 372 mg	
Sodium 180 mg	8 %
Potassium 138 mg	3 %
Calcium 56 mg	4 %
Iron 1.8 mg	10 %

*5% or less is a little, 15% or more is a lot

Serving size

Amount of fibre in one serving.

Compare the amount of fibre in 1 serving to the fibre amounts listed in each step to see where the food fits.

- The example food can be eaten in step 1 as it has less than 2 g fibre.

Eat protein foods

Many protein foods have no or little fibre, except for plant-based options, like legumes and soy.

Protein foods without fibre (animal-based) that can be eaten in any step, include:

- meats, like beef, elk, pork, and rabbit
- chicken, duck, and pheasant
- dairy foods, like cheese and milk
- eggs
- fish and shellfish

Protein foods with fibre (plant-based), include:

- legumes (beans, split peas, and lentils)
- nuts and seeds
- soy foods and tofu

You can still have plant-based protein foods in steps 1 and 2 by blending, pureeing, or cooking until soft (you can mash it with a fork). This helps make these foods easier to digest.

Step 1: Lower fibre foods

Foods at this step have less than 2 g fibre in 1 serving.

- Start here if you often have gut symptoms or if you have or are at risk of bowel obstruction.
- Stay at this step until you tolerate these foods well and have no gut symptoms.

	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Vegetables and fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% fruit and vegetable juices • Blended/ pureed raw fruit and vegetables • Canned or pureed fruit like applesauce • Canned vegetables like wax beans and tomatoes • Ripe or soft, raw fruit with seeds, pits, and peels removed, like apple, banana, mango, melon, and peaches • Soft, cooked vegetables with seeds and peels removed, like beets, cauliflower, carrots, parsnips, potatoes, squash, and turnip • Tomato sauce 	<p>Okay to eat when blended or pureed. Limit or avoid when whole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avocado • Cooked vegetables with skins, peels or tough fibres, like peas, corn, asparagus, and string beans • Dried fruit and fruit leathers, including apples, apricots, coconut, currants, dates, figs, prunes, and raisins • Raw fruit with tough peels, seeds, fibres, or membranes like apples with peels, berries, grapes, kiwi fruit, and pineapple • Raw vegetables, leafy green vegetables, rhubarb, and salad
Grain foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% or less whole wheat bread • All baked goods made from white or refined flour such as white and sourdough breads, bagels, buns, crackers, and pancakes • Arrowroot and digestive cookies, pretzels, and rice cakes • Low fibre cooked and cold cereals, such as Cheerios®, Corn Flakes®, Cream of Wheat®, Rice Krispies®, and quick or instant oatmeal • Melba toast • Well-cooked barley, pasta, regular couscous, and white rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% whole grain or whole wheat breads, bagels, baked goods, and crackers • Breads or baked goods with dried fruit, nuts, or seeds • Brown or wild rice • Granola • Pasta made from whole grains, whole wheat, or made from legumes like black beans or chickpeas • Quinoa • Steel cut oats • Wheat or oat bran
Protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All meat, poultry, and wild game • Blended/ pureed cooked or canned beans, split peas, and lentils including hummus • Dairy products, like cheese, cottage cheese, milk, and yogurt • Eggs • Fish, seafood, and shellfish • Fortified plant-based beverages, like soy • Smooth nut and seed butters • Soy or tofu yogurt • Tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chunky nut and seed butters • Meat with casings, like sausages, wieners, and deli meat (can eat these if casing is removed) • Trail mix with nuts, seeds, and dried fruit • Whole beans, split peas, and lentils • Whole nuts and seeds
Other foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barbeque sauce, ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard, salad dressings (seedless), sour cream, and vinegar • Butter, margarine, and oils like olive or canola, and cream cheese • Jelly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jam and marmalade • Pickles, relish, chutney, and olives • Popcorn

Step 2: Medium fibre foods

Foods at this step have 2–4 g fibre in 1 serving.

- Move to this step when you tolerate step 1 foods well and have no gut symptoms.
- Stay at step 2 until you tolerate these foods well and have no gut symptoms.

	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Vegetables and fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All vegetables and fruits in “Foods to choose” from step 1 • Cooked string beans and asparagus • Green leafy vegetables and salad • Potatoes and apples with peels • Raw fruit, like apricots, blueberries, kiwi fruit, papaya, and strawberries 	<p>Okay to eat when blended or pureed. Limit or avoid when whole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked vegetables with skins or peels, like peas and corn • Dried fruit and fruit leathers, like apples, apricots, coconut, cranberries, currants, dates, figs, prunes, and raisins • Raw fruit, like blackberries, chokecherries, pears, raspberries and those with tough fibres like pineapple • Raw vegetables with tough fibres, like celery and rhubarb
Grain foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All grain foods in “Foods to choose” from step 1 • 100% whole grain and whole wheat breads, crackers, bagels, and pastas • Soft, cooked whole grains, like brown rice and quinoa • Wheat and oat bran 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granola • Steel cut oats • Whole grain breads or baked goods with seeds, nuts, or dried fruit • Wild rice
Protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All protein foods in “Foods to choose” from step 1 • Split peas cooked until soft • Smooth and chunky nut and seed butters • Whole nuts and seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meat with casings or rinds, like sausages, wieners, bologna, and ham (can eat if casing or rind is removed) • Pasta made from legumes, like chickpeas or black beans • Trail mix with dried fruit • Whole beans and lentils
Other foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other foods in “Foods to choose” from step 1 • Jam, pickles, relish, chutney, and olives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popcorn

Step 3: Higher fibre foods

All foods can be eaten at this step.

Move to this stage when you tolerate step 2 medium fibre foods (have low or manageable gut symptoms).

- Include higher fibre foods each time you eat.

More information



- Talk to your healthcare team
- Call Health Link at 811, and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on [ahs.ca/811](#)
- Visit [ahs.ca/Nutrition](#)

