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What is dietary fiber?

Dietary fiber — found mainly in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes — includes all parts of plant foods that your body can't digest or absorb. Unlike other food components such as fats, proteins or carbohydrates — which your body breaks down and absorbs — fiber isn't digested by your body. Therefore, it passes relatively intact through your stomach, small intestine, colon and out of your body. It might seem like fiber doesn't do much, but it has several important roles in maintaining health.

Fiber is commonly classified into two categories: those that don't dissolve in water (insoluble fiber) and those that do (soluble fiber).

Benefits of a high-fiber diet:

- Normalizes bowel movements
- Helps maintain bowel integrity and health
- Lowers blood cholesterol levels
- Helps control blood sugar levels
- Aids in weight loss
- Uncertain effect on colorectal cancer

Additional information on fiber can be found at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fiber/NU00033>

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