

The 30 Pound Club

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Fiber and Lower BMI

In a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* last week, researchers reported on the relationship between fiber intake and mortality. I'll tell you more about that in Saturday's message, but what struck me about the study was the relationship between fiber intake and body mass index (BMI). For both men and women, as their fiber intake increased, their BMI decreased. The difference was about one BMI unit between the lowest and highest fiber intakes. That translates to six to nine pounds depending on initial BMI. Think about it: you could be seven pounds lighter for doing something that you should be doing anyway.

The typical American or Canadian gets about 12 to 13 grams of fiber per day. By simply doubling that intake, you can eliminate one BMI unit without taking anything out of your diet; in fact, you may actually get to eat more than you are right now.

In the study, the foods that conveyed the best benefit for reducing mortality were grains, vegetables, and beans; that means they also contributed to the reduction in BMI. Comparing the calories between these categories of food and the highly refined, low-fiber foods we usually eat, you can actually eat more. For example, there are just slightly fewer calories in a cup of sweet corn than an ounce of corn chips, but the corn will satisfy your hunger a lot more than a measly ounce of chips (with no dip), as well as providing nearly three times as much fiber. And because fiber absorbs liquids, high-fiber foods help you feel full longer.

Sometimes it seems like we are constantly eliminating foods to lose weight. Instead of reducing your choices, think about expanding them by replacing what you currently eat with better choices—more grains, vegetables, and beans.

One more point. The researchers said the fiber that conveyed the benefit to mortality came from food, but they didn't assess other fiber intake. We all need to eat better foods—no question. But I still think that taking a fiber supplement once or twice a day can help our weight loss efforts. It may be more about the timing of that intake than anything. I use soluble and insoluble fiber mixed with water and take my probiotic at the same time. Taking that combination with a water chaser in the 15 to 30 minutes before eating may help us eat less. I'm going to try it consistently for a week and see how it goes.

Give that a try, in addition to eating more fiber-rich foods. You can't mix the fibers with water ahead of time—they quickly turn into a gel. But with just a little planning, you might find that you're eating less because you feel full sooner. And your digestive system will love you for it as well.

One and Done.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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