



Basic Health Info

Your Fiber Insurance

By Chet Zelasko, PhD

Today's food is highly processed for the most part. Even foods that we consider to be good choices are processed such as whole grain breads and cereals; the wheat or oats are ground and in the process, may lose some nutrients. One of the casualties of processing is fiber. That's why today, in spite of the number of calories we eat, the typical adult gets 12–13 grams of fiber per day. We need 30–35 grams per day, so even if we eat what is considered a healthy diet, we may still fall short.

With all the emphasis on the Paleolithic diet today, we should remember that some of our ancestors from that period got 150–200 grams of fiber per day because their diet was based on specific cacti, the most available food. They ate enough to satisfy their protein requirement. No, there was no RDA, but they inherently seemed to know it. How do we know that's how much fiber they ate? There are anthropologists who examined the coprolites and analyzed their content. Coprolites are petrified feces that were found in the Paleolithic caves used as bathrooms. I'm wagering our ancestors spent a lot of time there.

Back to today. Fiber has been shown to have many health benefits besides helping our digestive system. Fiber helps with cardiovascular health by reducing cholesterol and lowering blood pressure. It may help reduce our risk of some types of cancer. From a weight loss perspective, it can keep us feeling full longer and prevent us from overeating. For diabetics, it may help improve blood sugar levels.

Here's an easy way to help insure you meet your fiber goal. Add this drink to your daily routine:

The Fiber Drink Recipe

- 1 teaspoon inulin or dextrin fiber
- 1 teaspoon psyllium fiber
- Broad-spectrum probiotic
- 4 ounces of water

I mix the two types of fiber in a two-cup storage container rather than mix it each time. I put two teaspoons in a glass, add the probiotic and water, and stir until it's completely dissolved. I drink it down and follow it with another glass of water. Using that once a day gives you an extra 5–8 grams of fiber per day.



Inulin and **dextrin** are interchangeable but come from different sources. Inulin comes from chicory root. Dextrin has many brand names such as Benefiber; if you have a gluten allergy, make sure you get one sourced from corn.

Use any **probiotic** that has as many varieties of bacteria as you can. I take one that has 16, but even one lactobacillus strain is better than none.

Psyllium fiber is available in many brands. Metamucil is the most common, but any type is fine. You can get plain ground psyllium from a health food store, but I prefer highly ground psyllium simply because it makes a smoother drink. I get a flavored Metamucil because I like the pink lemonade flavor, but that's a

personal choice. Metamucil has introduced an appetite control blend for weight loss; it's still the same formula as their regular fiber.

The Bottom Line

It's still a good idea to eat as many fiber-containing foods as you can—the fiber drink is just an insurance policy to hit your fiber goal for the day. Bottom's up!

Dr. Chet Zelasko is dedicated to helping men and women get healthy and fit. As a health and fitness consultant with a PhD in Exercise Physiology and Health Education from Michigan State University, he provides health information based on the most recent research and delivers it in a way that's easy to understand. Whether in person during seminars, in audio recordings, or in the written word, he makes sense out of the health news people hear so they can make better health choices and achieve optimal health. He's conducted research and been published in peer-reviewed journals. He is certified by the American College of Sports Medicine as a Health and Fitness Specialist and has taught in ACSM certification workshops throughout the United States; he also belongs to the American Society of Nutrition. Although Grand Rapids, Michigan, is home, he has presented seminars on health to groups all over North America, Mexico, and the Caribbean and has written extensively on the health benefits of a good diet, regular exercise, and targeted supplementation.

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