



Fiber

You've probably heard that fiber is an important part of a healthy diet. But the different types of fiber can be a little confusing. Here's a guide so you can be sure to include both types in your daily food choices.

Soluble fiber dissolves in water. Its benefits to your body include slowing the breakdown of complex carbohydrates and helping to reduce blood sugar. When you eat it in large enough quantity, it can help lower cholesterol as well.

Good sources of soluble fiber: grains such as rye, barley, and oats; vegetables and fruits; legumes.

Insoluble fiber doesn't dissolve in water and is not absorbed or digested by the body. But it does reduce hunger (it's filling!), helps keep your gastrointestinal tract clean, and aids in regular bowel movements by pulling water into the colon.

Good sources of insoluble fiber: Brown rice; whole wheat breads and cereals; seeds; fruit and vegetable skins; legumes.

Prebiotics, Probiotics, and Polypenic Compounds

Our digestive tract is extremely important for our overall health. We will discuss in more detail in Dr. A's Habits of Health, 2nd Edition, Part 2.14, about inflammation but for here there are some foods that are important to keep our gut healthy.

The gut microbiome is made up of over a trillion microorganisms and is responsible for maintaining the integrity and health of our intestinal lining. With the high consumption of a highly processed diet, the gut flora suffers, leading to the potential for more weight gain, inflammation, and poor digestion of vital nutrients. This can lead to leaky gut which has been linked to Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, asthma, eczema, arthritis, psoriasis, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue syndrome, depression and much more. With a proper diet the bacteria produce more fermentation that nourish the gut flora.



So what can we do to improve gut health?

It starts with adding probiotics which are live healthy bacteria which are found in certain foods and supplements. The second part is to consume more prebiotics which come from the rich fiber sources we mentioned above. The third part is to provide the polyphenolic compounds that come from fruits and vegetables that slows the growth of the toxic microbes so that the healthy bacteria can flourish.

Polyphenols, like curcumin, found in the spice turmeric which is in curry based foods can help and actually enter the bloodstream to have an anti-inflammatory effect on the whole body. Eating whole plant foods and live fermented products can really improve gut health. Great sources of probiotics come from several sources that most people do not eat that often. Fermented pickles (not those made with vinegar), sauerkraut, kimchi and kefir are all great sources along with live cultures of yogurt.