

# HEALTHY AFTER 50

Drugs! "Les médicaments : Oui...Non...Mais!", Montérégie

## The importance of dietary fiber and water in constipation



### DIETARY FIBER

#### THE WAY FIBER ACTS

- Fiber strengthens the consistency to food which forces you to chew properly and break the food up.
- Fiber is, in general, non-digestible and will end up intact in the large intestine (colon).
- Fiber absorbs water (up to five times its weight) and expands as it passes through the bowel.
- In summary, fiber has a recognized role in regulating gastro-intestinal function, particularly in helping to prevent constipation.

#### SOURCES AND RECOMMENDED QUANTITIES

The "Canadian Food Guide" mentions three food groups which are excellent sources of fiber, they are :

- **Cereals**  
e.g. : All Bran, Bran buds, Shreddies, Shredded Wheat, Whole grain breads and pastas.
- **Fruits and vegetables**  
e.g. : Cooked prunes, raisins, dates, raspberries, pears.
- **Meat, fish and poultry substitutes**  
e.g. : Legumes and nuts : Baked beans, red kidney beans, split peas, lentils, chickpeas, peanuts, almonds.

### **Importance notice : don't take too much fiber at once!!!**

***Sometimes an excess of fiber can cause discomfort by producing gas. We, therefore, suggest that you gradually increase the amount of fiber in your diet if you are not taking enough. For example, start by switching from white bread to whole-wheat bread.***

# **THE IMPORTANCE OF DIETARY FIBER AND WATER IN CONSTIPATION**

## **TIPS FOR INCREASING THE FIBER CONTENT OF YOUR DIET**

- Add bran cereals to chilli, thick soup, cooked vegetables, sandwich fillings, ground meat and batter for fish and chicken.
- Eat whole grain bread.
- Add bran to pancake, muffin and bread mixes. Sprinkle bran on ice cream, yoghurt and puddings.
- Replace half the white flour in your favourite recipes with whole-wheat flour (pie-crusts, muffins, date squares).
- Eat fresh fruit and vegetables every day – preferably raw and not peeled.
- Vary your diet by adding legumes (beans, peas, etc.) to soups, salads and main courses.
- Choose oatmeal or whole-wheat cookies and desserts instead of white flour cookies and desserts.
- If you want a snack, try popcorn, nuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds, fresh and dried fruits and fresh vegetables instead of chips, cakes and sweets.
- If you like low fiber refined cereals such as Rice Krispies, Special K, Alphabets, Cherrios, here are two ways to add fiber :

**Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of bran to your favourite cereal.  
Add some raisins to enhance the flavour.**

- Take 3 tablespoons of natural bran each day in juice, cereals or other foods if you have a tendency to constipation.
- Refer to the recipes in Kellogg's brochure "High Five for Fiber".

## **WATER**

### **THE ROLE OF WATER**

- Water transports nutrients in the digestive system, the blood and inside cells.
- The organism needs water to eliminate waste in urine and feces (stools).
- Water regulates the body temperature.
- The combination of water and fiber prevents constipation.

### **RECOMMENDED QUANTITIES**

- A minimum of 6 to 8 glasses of water per day.

### **WATER IN VARIOUS FORMS**

- Water from the tap and bottled mineral or non-mineral water.
- All flavours of herbal teas (not more than 3 to 4 cups per day).
- Soups and broths.
- Fruit or vegetable juices.
- Cereal beverages (ovaltine, postum...).

### **TIPS TO A HEALTHY INTAKE OF WATER WAY**

- Begin your meal by drinking a glass of juice or soup.
- To replace soft drinks, try half and half, juice and carbonated mineral water.
- Take a sip each time you pass a water fountain.