



Hungry Kids: Fill Them Up With Healthy High-Fiber Foods

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No one likes to be “hungry” – especially children! Since good nutrition is essential to normal growth and development, it’s important to feed hungry children food that tastes good, satisfies hunger and avoids adding unnecessary calories to their diet. Serving children fiber-rich foods at meals and snacks is a strategy that is easy to follow; full of delicious, nutrient-dense foods that children love; and proven to be beneficial to their health.

The proportion of overweight children in the United States has crescendoed, tripling since the early 1970's and prompting the media to call it an "epidemic of childhood obesity."

Currently, nearly 16 percent of children in the United States ages 6 to 19 are overweight, and another 16 percent are “at risk of becoming overweight.” This means that one in three children weighs too much for his or her health. High-fiber diets can play an important role in helping children maintain their weight, manage their health and live healthier lives.

Why Fiber is Good for Kids

Dietary fiber can be the first line of defense in weight management. It satisfies hunger and helps children feel “full” for a longer period of time. How does it work?

- Most high-fiber foods require more chewing, which helps to satisfy hunger
- High-fiber foods are typically bulky so the stomach fills up faster (it can also delay the time it takes for the stomach to empty)
- Fiber slows down the absorption of nutrients – like sugar – so that large, sudden increases in blood sugar (and insulin) are avoided
- Most high-fiber foods are calorie free – so it helps satisfy hunger with fewer calories



About Fiber and High Fiber Foods

Fibers are complex carbohydrates, like starch, that is not digested from plants. They are classified into two types: Soluble fiber, dissolves in water and may form a gel (examples are oats, many fruits, vegetables, beans and barley); and insoluble fiber, which does not dissolve in water, (examples include, whole-wheat flour, wheat bran and some vegetables).

Many foods are a combination of the two so it’s best to choose foods that are high in fiber. Foods that claim to be high in fiber should contain 5 or more grams of fiber per serving according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

What You Can Learn From Food Labels

High-Fiber:

5 grams or more per serving

Good Source:

2.5 to 4.9 grams per serving

More or added fiber:

At least 2.5 grams more (than the traditional food) per serving

How to Increase "Fiber-Rich" Foods in Your Child's Diet

Most children get half or less of the recommended amount of dietary fiber per day – so there is a lot of room for improvement. Chances are you're already adding whole grains, fruits and vegetables to their diet, but encouraging your children to eat more whole grains, fruits and veggies can be a challenge. Below are a few tips and tricks to help boost your child's fiber intake:

Recommended Daily Fiber Intake for Children

<u>Age</u>	<u>Fiber (grams)</u>
1 – 3	19 g
4 – 8	25 g
9 – 13 (boys)	31 g
9 – 13 (girls)	26 g
14 – 18 (boys)	38 g
14 – 18 (girls)	26 g

10 Tips to Add High-Fiber Foods to Your Child's Diet

1. Stock-up on whole-grain breads, rolls, crackers and cereal. Encourage whole-grain crackers topped with peanut butter or low-fat cheese as a snack, rather than cookies. Or consider pouring them a bowl of their favorite cereal topped with fresh fruit and low-fat milk.
2. Serve whole-grain pasta (look for white whole-grain pasta if your kids get squeamish). When you cook a red spaghetti sauce, throw in onions, mushrooms and peppers. You may even consider mixing in a fiber supplement like Fibersure, a texture-free, flavor-free, natural fiber supplement that can be mixed into most foods and drinks.
3. Encourage your children to eat two to three pieces of whole fruits a day and limit fruit juice to one small glass a day. Most fruit juices have little or no dietary fiber, whereas whole fruit is a good source of fiber.
4. Make sandwiches with whole-grain bread and pile on fixings – lettuce, tomatoes, and even sprouts – for a vegetable serving!
5. Put a dish of colorful raw vegetables on the kitchen table before dinner or dip raw veggies in peanut butter for a snack. This way, hungry children can enjoy a healthy snack while they wait.
6. Try a sweet vegetable snack such as baked yellow plantains. Cut the plantains in half lengthwise, sprinkle them with sugar, cinnamon, and lemon juice, and bake 1 hour at 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
7. Snack on "mini" vegetable pizzas. Toast half an English muffin spread with a tablespoon of tomato sauce and top with low-fat mozzarella cheese and some small pieces of red and green bell pepper.
8. Make raw or grilled vegetable "kabobs." Thread skewers with small mushrooms, cherry or grape tomatoes, broccoli florets, and chunks of red and green bell pepper. Let the kids design their own kabobs. They might prefer to spear baby carrots, pieces of zucchini, or tender pea pods. Any of these kabobs can be eaten raw or lightly grilled.
9. Keep a variety of soups on hand for snacks and mealtime. Vegetable and bean soups can be high in fiber and leave you feeling full and satisfied. Add your own leftover vegetables to soups and stews to make them fuller meals. Some good add-ins are peas, green beans, sliced carrots and tomatoes.
10. Be creative! Cut raw vegetables or fruit into pretty shapes for young children. You can cut circles, squares, and triangles from green and red bell peppers or pineapple; make curvy

snakes from long, thin slices of carrots; and cauliflower faces with raisin eyes and mouth. Or try some broccoli or strawberries on the end of a Popsicle stick and pair it with a fun dipping sauce.

Other Helpful Resources for Parents

- MyPyramid – http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/resources/mpk_worksheet.pdf
- International Food Information Council (IFIC) – www.ific.org