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*“The Benefits of Dietary Fiber”*

Dietary fiber is a type of complex carbohydrate found only in plant foods. Despite its many health benefits, more than 90% of women and 97% of men in the United States do not meet the recommended daily intake. For decades, research has shown that diets rich in fiber can significantly reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and colon cancer while supporting healthy digestion and regularity.

Plant-based complex carbohydrates such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds are not only high in fiber but also rich in essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. These nutrients help protect cells from damage, reduce inflammation, and strengthen the immune system. Because they are digested more slowly than refined carbohydrates, they also help maintain steady energy levels and prevent blood sugar spikes often caused by highly processed foods.

Researcher Dr. T. Colin Campbell of Cornell University found that individuals with heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and certain autoimmune disorders often experience improvements in symptoms when they increase their intake of whole plant foods while reducing added fats, sugars, and refined grains.

Vegetables, fruits, legumes (such as lentils, peas, and beans), and whole grains also promote a feeling of fullness while providing fewer calories than many processed foods. This can make it easier to manage appetite and maintain a healthy weight. Adding more fiber to your diet doesn't have to be complicated. Simple swaps like choosing brown rice instead of white rice, whole fruit instead of fruit juice, air-popped popcorn instead of chips, or oatmeal instead of sugary cereals can make a meaningful difference over time.

Unlike refined carbohydrates, which are often stripped of fiber and loaded with added sugars and unhealthy fats, complex carbohydrates provide lasting energy, support fullness, and deliver a wide range of nutrients along with the important benefits of dietary fiber.

Information comes from Kansas State University Publications.