

Tips and Tricks for Fitting More Fiber in Your Child's Diet

Fiber is an essential component of a healthy diet, keeping the digestive system moving smoothly. Too often adults and especially children are lacking in the amount of fiber their bodies need.

For years, "Age Plus 5" was the standard for determining the daily grams of fiber recommended for children. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) adopted this simple guideline to help parents navigate the grocery aisles and plan healthy meals for their families. With the old fiber formula, a 5-year-old needed 10 grams of fiber while an older child, say 10-years-old, needed 15. Now, however, new guidelines, recently adopted by the AAP in their 2009 Pediatric Handbook, significantly increased the recommended daily fiber requirement — a move promoted by the multiple health benefits of fiber including improving gastrointestinal function and creating a feeling of "fullness."

Age / Gender	Fiber (grams)
2-3 years:	19
4-8 years:	25
9-11 years	
Female:	26
Male:	31

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate found in plant foods that humans cannot absorb or digest. According to Liz Weiss, MS, RD, co-author of *The Moms' Guide to Meal Makeovers*, "Foods that are rich in fiber include things like fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, beans, and nuts. The challenge that many busy moms face, however, is actually getting their kids to eat these foods happily and without complaint."



Prepared hot cereals topped with fresh fruit are a nutritious and delicious breakfast or snack full of fiber.

A recent survey found that while nearly 90 percent of moms know fiber is an important component of a healthy diet for children, over half don't know how many grams of fiber children are supposed to consume each day. The new guidelines are designed to clarify that issue, but what's a parent to do when their child refuses vegetables or freaks at the sight of whole wheat bread? Weiss offers eight mom-tested, kid-approved tips and tricks for filling in the family fiber gap:

- Opt for whole grain ready-to-eat and hot breakfast cereals. If the kids say, "no way," preferring refined cereal instead, compromise by mixing the two together. You'll be halfway to better nutrition and more fiber.

- Offer fiber-rich fresh or dried fruit before the usual carb-based foods make their way to the table. Kids often wake up hungry, so present them with naturally sweet fruit first when their stomachs are growling.

- Give your kids an extra fiber boost with new Pedia-Lax™ Fiber Gummies. Just three penguin-shaped Fiber Gummies add 4.5 total grams of fiber to a child's diet, which is equivalent to a half cup of broccoli. Fiber Gummies taste great and are easy to include as part of the daily routine.

- Pasta salad for lunch is a fun change of pace for kids. Prepare with a whole wheat blend pasta, your child's favorite salad dressing, and nutritious and high-fiber ingredients including beans, chopped nuts, diced bell pepper, sliced carrots, and/or green peas.

- Add crunch to morning and afternoon snacks with popcorn (it's a whole grain), whole grain crackers with cheese, trail mix made with nuts, dried fruit, and cereal, or whole grain fig or fruit bars.

- Shred a carrot or dice up a red bell pepper and sauté with ground beef or turkey for tacos or sloppy Joe's.

- When baking, replace half the white flour with whole wheat flour.

- Add beans to soups, casseroles and salads. They're the highest fiber vegetable out there.

For more fiber tips and recipes, visit www.fibergummies.com.

According to Weiss, "The new fiber guidelines don't need to be daunting nor do parents have to walk around with a calculator! By choosing fiber-rich foods and incorporating them into everyday meals and snacks, kids will be well on their way to a great tasting, high fiber diet."