

January is National Fiber Focus Month from [Mayoclinic.com](http://Mayoclinic.com)

Dietary fiber — found mainly in fruits, veggies, whole grains and legumes — not just for prevention or relief of constipation.

Fiber can provide other health benefits as well, playing several important roles in maintaining health.

### Benefits of a high-fiber diet:

- Normalizes bowel movements
- May lower risk of developing hemorrhoids, and small pouches in your colon (diverticular disease)
- Lowers blood cholesterol levels.
- Helps control blood sugar levels.
- Aids in weight loss.



### Your best fiber choices:

- Grains and whole-grain products
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Beans, peas and other legumes
- Nuts and seeds



Refined or processed foods — such as canned fruits and vegetables and pulp-free juice, white bread and pasta, and non-whole-grain cereals — are lower in fiber content. Also, removing the skin from fruits and vegetables decreases their fiber content.

Whole foods rather than fiber supplements are generally better. However, some people may still need a fiber supplement if dietary changes aren't sufficient, or if they have certain medical conditions such as constipation, diarrhea or irritable bowel syndrome. Always check with your doctor if you feel you need to take fiber supplements.

### NOTE:

Increase fiber in your diet gradually over a period of a few weeks to allow the natural bacteria in your digestive system to adjust to the change. Also, drink plenty of water. Fiber works best when it absorbs water, making your stool soft and bulky.

### Tips for fitting in fiber:

- **For breakfast choose a high-fiber breakfast cereal.** 5 or more grams of fiber a serving. Opt for cereals with “bran” or “fiber” in the name. Or add a few tablespoons of unprocessed wheat bran to your favorite cereal.
- **Switch to whole grains.** Look for breads that list whole wheat, whole-wheat flour or another whole grain as the first ingredient on the label. Look for a brand with at least 2 grams of dietary fiber a serving. Experiment with brown rice, wild rice, barley, whole-wheat pasta and bulgur.
- **Bulk up your baked goods.** Substitute whole-grain flour for half or all of the white flour when baking. In yeast breads, use a bit more yeast or let the dough rise longer. When using baking powder, increase it by 1 teaspoon for every 3 cups of whole-grain flour. Try adding crushed bran cereal or unprocessed wheat bran to muffins, cakes and cookies.
- **Add pre-cut fresh or frozen veggies to soups and sauces.** For example, mix chopped frozen broccoli into prepared spaghetti sauce or toss fresh baby carrots into stews.
- **Eat more beans, peas and lentils.** Add kidney beans to canned soup or a green salad. Or make nachos with refried black beans, lots of fresh veggies, whole-wheat tortilla chips and salsa.
- **Eat fruit at every meal.** Apples, bananas, oranges, pears and berries are good sources of fiber.
- **Make snacks count.** Fresh and dried fruit, raw vegetables, low-fat popcorn and whole-grain crackers are all good choices. An occasional handful of nuts is also a healthy, high-fiber snack.

## Fruits and veggies can lower women's risk for a stroke by 50%!

More women than men suffer strokes.

According to a study involving over 31,000 women, those women at high risk for stroke (having high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and history of smoking) whose diets included a high level of antioxidants had a 46-57% lower risk of stroke.

Consuming a diet that meets your recommended amount of fruits and vegetables each day – along with adequate exercise – is one of the best ways to build a strong defense against heart disease and other diseases in the future.

So, enjoy your fruits and vegetables in a variety of colors and forms at each and every eating occasion!

Source: [FruitsandVeggiesMoreMatters.org](http://FruitsandVeggiesMoreMatters.org)

Happy New Year!

## Back Health: 5 tips for relieving stress on your back

**1. Stand up straight** – good posture when you sit, stand, and walk can help you keep your back healthy and prevent pain. Stand up straight with your shoulders back with your knees and hips in line. Make sure your chair has good back support.

**2. Sleep on your side** – try putting a pillow between your knees.

**3. Lift carefully** – don't try to lift things that are too heavy for you. When lifting, bend your knees and keep your back straight. Keep the object close to your body. Don't twist and lift at the same time.

**4. Wear the right shoes** – when shopping for shoes, look for ones that offer support and fit well. Low-heeled shoes with good support can prevent back injury.

**5. Maintain a healthy weight** – Being too heavy, especially around your waist, may put extra stress on your back. Being overweight also means poor physical condition with weaker muscles and less flexibility.



Source: [HumanaWellness](http://HumanaWellness)

## White Chicken Chili from MayoClinic.com

Serves 8

**Tip:** To add more variety in flavor, color and texture, add several different beans, including kidney, garbanzo or black beans, or add more chopped vegetables, such as carrots and celery. If you add these vegetables, increase the amount of chicken broth to accommodate the added ingredients.

### Ingredients

- 1 can (10 ounces) white chunk chicken
- 3 cups cooked white beans
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) low-sodium diced tomatoes
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 medium green pepper, chopped
- 1 medium red pepper, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- Cayenne pepper, to taste
- 6 tbs shredded reduced-fat Monterey Jack cheese
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 6 oz low-fat baked tortilla chips (about 65 chips)

### Directions

- In a large pot, add chicken, beans, tomatoes and chicken broth. Cover and simmer over medium heat.
- Meanwhile, spray a nonstick frying pan with cooking spray. Add onions, peppers and garlic and saute until vegetables are soft, 3-5 minutes.
- Add onion and pepper mixture to the soup pot. Stir in chili powder, cumin, oregano and, as desired, cayenne pepper. Simmer for about 10 minutes, or until all the vegetables are soft.
- Ladle into warmed bowls. Sprinkle each serving with 1 tablespoon cheese and 1 teaspoon cilantro. Serve with baked chips on the side (about 6 to 8 chips with each serving of chili).

### Nutritional Analysis (per serving)

Serving size: About 1 1/2 cups

Calories 268

Protein 19 g

Carbohydrate 41 g

Total fat 4 g

Saturated fat 1 g

Monounsaturated fat 1 g

Cholesterol 22 mg

Sodium 389 mg

**Fiber 7 g**

Potassium 647 mg

Calcium 155 mg