

- Katie J.: Good morning, and welcome to Apple A Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness show where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host. And my guest today is Kary Sytsma. She's a health and wellness coach for us here at Lake Region Healthcare and she's the featured speaker at our Living Well series next week, which will be the March Living Well series. Already looking at March. And because it's colon cancer awareness month, Kary's going to help us understand better how a high-fiber diet can improve our health overall and can also impact colon health.
- Katie J.: So thanks for joining us this morning, Kary.
- Kary S.: Hi, thanks for having me.
- Katie J.: As I mentioned, our topic is fiber, so that's what I want to focus on during this show today is to give our listeners some education on what fiber is, the benefits of the high-fiber diet, and hopefully pique their interest in learning more and join us at next Tuesday's Living Well session to really deep dive into it. But let's just start off with some basics. What is fiber?
- Kary S.: All right. Well fiber is ... Well dietary fiber is an indigestible carbohydrate found only in plant foods. So it's the structural part of plants. Dietary fiber is found in all plant dry foods such as; vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes or beans.
- Katie J.: Okay. So it's found in all kinds of sources then. Why is it important to a healthy diet? And maybe in particular to our colon health?
- Kary S.: Okay. So I feel like fiber is probably the most underrated nutrient of all time.
- Katie J.: Oh, interesting.
- Kary S.: Yeah. I feel pretty strongly about this topic.
- Katie J.: I guess, yeah.
- Kary S.: It lowers our risk of so many types of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease. So think heart attacks and strokes. It helps lower the risk of type two diabetes. It helps maintain our weight, and helps us lose weight if we need to. It lowers our cholesterol levels. And of course, it lowers our risk of many types of cancers including colon cancer.
- Katie J.: Okay.
- Kary S.: And one of the largest studies done on diet and cancer to date found that people who ate the most dietary fiber, so at least 35 grams of fiber per day, reduced their risk of colon cancer by 40% compared with those who ate the least amount of fiber, which is right around 15 grams a day. But here's the most terrifying fact. Less than 3% of Americans are reaching the minimum recommended amount of fiber in a day.

- Katie J.: Wow. I was going to ask that. Do we have any idea of like how much does the average person eat in terms of dietary fiber. It sounds like we're not doing a very good job.
- Kary S.: No, we're doing a terrible job actually. So just to clarify, you know we talk about high-fiber diet. But it's funny that we call it a high-fiber diet 'cause really it's just a normal fiber diet. So the FDA recommends 25 to 35 grams of fiber per day, but the American Institute of Cancer Research reports the lowest risk of colorectal cancer is associated with a dietary fiber intake of about 35 grams or more per day.
- Katie J.: Okay, so if we're talking high-fiber, we're probably indicating at least that 35 gram per day minimum.
- Kary S.: Yes.
- Katie J.: Okay. How do I go about figuring out how much do I need to add to what I'm eating, or how do I make sure that my daily intake is in that range?
- Kary S.: So it's helpful to know where you're at to start. So how much fiber am I getting in a day? Unless you're really paying attention, you're not going to know. So I like using an app, like MyFitnessPal. It's the same thing. It's like an in-app food journal. So not only does it help me stay within an appropriate calorie range, but I can also monitor my nutritional intake.
- Kary S.: So I can check to see how many grams of fiber I'm getting in a day just by plugging in what foods that I'm eating. If you wanted to, you could keep track of your carbohydrate intake, your protein intake, your fat intake, as well. If you really want to take a deeper dive, you can look and see, all right, well how much cholesterol am I getting? Or how much sodium? So it really is just a great tool to figure out where you're at nutritionally.
- Kary S.: But I do want to say you don't want to just jump right in and increase your fiber intake in large amounts if your body isn't used to it. So if you're average, and you're only getting 15 grams or less, you might not want to start tomorrow and eat 35 grams of fiber. Because although fiber is associated with having healthy bowel movements, taking in too much at one time can have the opposite effect. So knowing how much you're getting on average, and increasing slowly, is really going to help you reduce that risk of feeling bloated, gassy, or being constipated. And it's also going to be really important that if this is something that you're interested in doing, increasing your fiber intake, and it should be, you're going to want to make sure that you're getting enough water just for that help with easy transit and elimination.
- Katie J.: Sure, sure. Like anything, a moderate approach, you know.
- Kary S.: Yes.
- Katie J.: Let's ease into things. And I like that you mentioned the app too. I mean, of course you can use the traditional write down what you eat and keep track of things that way. But it's going to take a lot more work on your part to determine how much fiber is in there. I

love how the app just kind of, you plug in what you eat and then it spits back to you kind of all of that breakout for you. Right?

Kary S.: Right. And it's not going to be 100% perfect, but it's definitely going to get you within a better range than you would know otherwise.

Katie J.: Right. Absolutely.

Katie J.: So when we talk about increasing our fiber then, what are some of the good sources, or maybe best foods to incorporate into your diet for increasing fiber intake?

Kary S.: Okay. So like I said, as long as it's coming from a plant food, it's a good choice. So any vegetable, any fruit, whole grain, or legume will be a good choice. However, on average fruits and vegetables have about four grams of fiber per serving, or about a cup. So you would need about seven servings a day in order to reach that goal. So that's at least [inaudible 00:06:36] in a minimum, you're going to want to get five cups of fruits and vegetables in a day.

Kary S.: But we also find fiber in whole grain foods such as; oatmeal, quinoa, brown rice, whole grain wheat, even popcorn is a whole grain. So that's going to be high in fiber. I also like to add ground flaxseed and hemp seeds or chia seeds into my diet to increase fiber as well. But overall, if you're asking for a winner, legumes and beans would be number one because they have the highest amount of fiber per gram.

Katie J.: Okay. It's all starting to make sense. Why five cups of fruits and vegetables are recommended, right?

Kary S.: Right.

Katie J.: Why we see people putting chia seeds and flax seeds into all kinds of recipes now. It's all coming full circle. Any other tips you have for incorporating more fiber into your diet?

Kary S.: No. I would say just focus on the foods, make every effort to start there. So you're going to want to try to include these in every meal in order to get that amount throughout the day. You know if you put off having it for breakfast and you put off having it for lunch, it's going to be really hard to get that adequate intake all at dinner time. So just be mindful of eating a little bit every time.

Kary S.: One food that I try to eat, and you've heard me talk about it before because I love it so much, is overnight oatmeal. It's just such an easy way to increase the fiber. So easy. You put a quarter cup of oatmeal in a Mason jar with a tablespoon of ground flax seeds, a tablespoon of chia seeds, and a cup of fruit. So you mix that with three quarter cup of liquid, and you're looking at 16 to 20 grams of fiber just for that one meal. It takes about two minutes to put it together.

Katie J.: Right. And it's ready to grab in the morning. Yeah.

- Kary S.: Yeah. Ready to go. And you're already, you know, more than halfway to your goal of fiber for the day.
- Katie J.: Great tip. What about supplements? Fiber supplements. How do you feel about those things like Metamucil? Are they, or if and when, they're appropriate in the diet?
- Kary S.: So the problem with a fiber supplement is that you're isolating the nutrient. So if you got your fiber from plant food sources, you're also getting all the other nutrients associated with that food. So think of all the vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, antioxidants, we're missing out on when we use a supplement like Metamucil. But if you feel like this is appropriate, talk to your healthcare provider and they can best guide you in that area.
- Katie J.: Sure. That's great advice. When we think about this session next Tuesday night and what you're planning to present there, who should really attend? And what can they expect to learn and take home for some practical knowledge that they can put into practice?
- Kary S.: Yeah. So as you can tell, I just love this topic. This session is going to be for anyone who wants to learn how to decrease their risk of chronic disease by improving their diet through adequate fiber intake. So I'm going to take a lot deeper dive into this topic. But more importantly, I'm going to give you a lot of practical ways that we can make this happen. So I'll have delicious recipes available, hopefully inspire you to be more proactive in eating for your best health.
- Katie J.: Oh, that sounds fantastic. And we always serve some healthy snacks at the Living Well series too. So it's fun to come and be able to enjoy some of those healthy snacks, maybe give you some new ideas there. Take in the education, meet some other people who are interested in the same thing as you. We hold these the first Tuesday of every month. So again, the March session is coming up next Tuesday, March 3rd in the Fergus Falls Public Library community room. Session starts at 5:45. We wrap up by 7:00, so it's not a huge investment of your time. But always, always worthwhile.
- Katie J.: Anything else you want to share with our listeners before we wrap up the show today?
- Kary S.: Yeah. I just want to reiterate again how important this topic is. When we know, through reports from the CDC that 70 to 80% of all healthcare spending is related to lifestyle related chronic diseases. The American Institute for Cancer Prevention, the American Heart Association, the CDC, the American Diabetes Society, they all say the same thing. If you want to do what you can to lower your risk of these diseases, you need to eat more plant foods. It's so simple, and it's so worth it.
- Katie J.: And I'm so glad that we have you as a resource to help us incorporate more of this practice into our daily living and really encourage everyone listening to attend the Living Well session next Tuesday, if you're able. And learn more about the benefits of a high-fiber diet and how you can make some little changes just day by day to incorporate more fiber into your daily eating. So again, we invite you, Living Well series, Tuesday,

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March 3rd at 5:45 at the Fergus Falls Public Library. If you'd like to RSVP, just shoot an email to livingwell@lrhc.org, or call us at 736-8699.

Katie J.: Kary Sytsma, health and wellness coach here at Lake Region Healthcare. My guest today, and our featured speaker at next week's Living Well series. Thanks for joining me and for all the great information, Kary.

Kary S.: Thank you, Katie.

Katie J.: Kary and Katie reminding you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.