TuSalud

Are Teens Consuming Enough Fiber?

Adolescents who don't consume enough soluble and insoluble fiber may face an increased risk of diabetes and high blood pressure.

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The daily recommended fiber intake for males is 38 grams and 25 grams for females. But new findings published in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition show that a majority of teens are eating far less fiber than they should, which may increase their risk in adulthood for diabetes and hypertension, reports Reuters.

For the study, researchers interviewed 754 Black and white adolescents, ages 14 to 18, in Augusta, Georgia, about their eating habits on at least four separate occasions. Scientists also checked participants' blood pressure (BP) and glucose levels and observed their insulin resistance.

In addition, researchers noted the total amount of fiber the group ingested as well as the two types of fiber people need in their diet: insoluble and soluble. (Insoluble fiber is found in grains, nuts, fruits and veggies; soluble fiber is found in beans, oats, barley and avocados.) The former helps prevent constipation while the latter curtails the amount of sugar absorbed in the blood.

Among the participants, only two consumed the minimum amount of daily recommended fiber. (Overall, teens ate 10.9 grams each day.) "Our adolescents had very low intakes of soluble and insoluble fiber," said senior study author Haidong Zhu of the Medical College of Georgia and Augusta University. "Both lower soluble and insoluble fiber intakes were associated with higher insulin levels."

Zhu added that only lower soluble fiber intake was associated with higher systolic and diastolic blood pressure scores. (The top number in a BP reading is the systolic pressure; the bottom number is the diastolic pressure.)

Researchers noted that male and female teens who upped their daily fiber intake to the recommended daily amount saw a drop in both their systolic and diastolic blood pressure numbers. (Adults could similarly benefit from such dietary changes.)

Study authors concluded that adolescents across gender and racial groups consume way less fiber than they should each day. In addition, scientists theorized that consuming fiber at the recommended levels may be associated with significant cardiovascular and metabolic benefits.

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