Fibre and your gut

How do I get more fibre without upsetting my gut?

Start gradually

The usual adult target is 30 g total fibre daily from varied foods. Build up gradually and keep drinking within any prescribed fluid limit. Follow a prescribed low-fibre diet.

Fibre types and oat beta-glucan

Soluble fibre dissolves; some forms make a gel. Oat beta-glucan is one example. Insoluble fibre adds stool bulk; wholegrains and skins provide it. Many foods contain both. Beta-glucans from oats and barley contribute to maintaining normal blood cholesterol levels at 3 g daily; a food making the authorised claim must provide at least 1 g per stated portion. This sits within a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle. Golden Fuel recipe beta-glucan amounts have not been calculated.

Gut microbes and absorption

Microbes can ferment some fibre into short-chain fatty acids. These can be absorbed; soluble fibre itself does not enter the bloodstream. Solubility and fermentation are different properties.

Live cultures and evidence

Some live yoghurts and fermented milks contain live cultures; check the label. Evidence for probiotic benefits varies between organisms and uses. Fermentation alone does not establish a health benefit.

Different portions change the answer

Made-up bread A: 6 g fibre per 100 g; 40 g gives 2.4 g. Bread B: 3 g per 100 g; 150 g gives 4.5 g. These are arithmetic examples, not serving recommendations.

Ask for help

Speak to your GP about persistent bowel symptoms, blood in the stool, an unexplained change in bowel habit or weight loss without trying.

Sources and full guidance

NHS: How to get more fibre into your diet
Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS: Fibre types and food sources
Dorset County Hospital NHS: Fibre and the gut microbiome (IBD leaflet; general physiology only used here)
Boets E, et al. (2017) Human study of short-chain fatty acid absorption. Journal of Physiology 595:541-555
NHS: Probiotics - evidence and limitations
NHS: Constipation
Royal Free London NHS: Low fibre diet
NHS: Water, drinks and hydration
EFSA: Oat and barley beta-glucans - physical properties in digestion
GOV.UK: Great Britain authorised nutrition and health claims register

A summary of the web guide, not a complete assessment of your needs. Full guide | Scope and personal advice.