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OATS, MY GOODNESS!

by Kohila Govindaraju, freelance nutritionist

Eating right and having a regular exercise routine have been shown to have a protective effect against the development of diabetes and heart disease.

Obesity is one of the risk factors for type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. It is a basic fact that excess body fat results from an imbalance between energy input and energy output. Heart disease results with an increase intake of saturated & trans fat, elevated blood cholesterol and obesity. The higher the cholesterol level, the higher the risk of heart and blood vessel disease.

Wholegrains like wheat, brown rice, barley, and oats are more effective in controlling the blood sugar. These high fibre foods tend to be low in fat and thus the energy density of such diets tends to be low. This means they can be more satiating; they reduce eating speed because increased chewing is required, which slows gastric emptying and contributes to a feeling of fullness.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT OATS?

Oats, nuts and fish are highly effective in preventing overweight and excess cholesterol. Researchers have found that soluble fibres in oats, beans, psyllium fibers help lower blood cholesterol and fasting blood glucose levels. Beta glucon, a water soluble fiber in oats, is an active component for the cholesterol lowering effect. It is the major fermentable compound in both cooked and uncooked oats.

In the bowel, beta glucon is fermented by bacteria to short chain fatty acids that may yield significant amount of metabolisable energy. This soluble fiber plays major role in reducing the absorption of cholesterol in the small intestine. Pectin and oat bran together play a major role in reducing the absorption of cholesterol. Pectin is another soluble fibre found in certain foods such as carrots, peas, beans, apples, citrus fruits and apricots.

NOT EVERYTHING IN THE NAME OF OATS IS GOOD FOR US

While oats provides countless health benefits, it is wise to read the food label of the oats product and opt for the low-sugar version. Some oatmeal cookies can have very little oats but more sugar and fats. Oat bran contains 50% more fibre and soluble fibre than oatmeal, thus making it more effective in lowering cholesterol.

Oatmeal is a whole grain (rolled oats) and oat bran is just the bran of the oats. Oat bran fills you up faster than oat meal. However, mineral availability can be impaired at high intakes of oats products due to the presence of high concentrations of phytates. Malting and soaking oats overnight can reduce the phytates, though.

To add more fibre to our diet, we need to gradually increase the amount to allow our digestive tract to adjust to the change. Adding fiber too quickly may cause gas, bloating or diarrhea.

While taking high fibrous food, do consume more water because fibre traps water and by soaking up, it keeps the waste products moving along the digestive tracts, smoothly.

A tenderly cooked cereal, with splashes of milk and embellished with nuts and fruit is so much more than a bowl of oats!

The greater the variety of food chosen, the better the mix of soluble and insoluble fibres. Combining high fibre cereal with our favourite cereal will enhance the flavour and variety, too! Wheat bran is a good source of insoluble fibre that helps to promote the regularity of bowel movements and prevents constipation. Whole grains with low saturated & trans fat food, fruits and vegetables work well in reducing and maintaining weight.

In addition to changing the diet, making additional heart healthy lifestyle changes is key to lowering our cholesterol in blood. Maintaining a healthy weight by controlling our carbohydrate intake keeps our blood sugar within a targeted range.

So, start your day with a wholesome whole meal breakfast with

- ❖ Oats muffin or
- ❖ Oats porridge with nuts and fruits or
- ❖ Whole meal roll with egg or peanut butter along with a fruit.



Oat meal is a whole grain (rolled oats) and oat bran is just the bran of the oats but oat bran satiates hunger more than oat meal.

To add more fibre to our diet, we need to gradually increase the amount to allow our digestive tract to adjust to the change.

Adding fibre too quickly may cause gas, bloating or diarrhoea.

