BARBARA OF NORTH

The Gentle Fiber Ramp

Six weeks. One small change a week. A pace your gut can follow.

What is in here

- Six weeks, one page each: the one change, three ways to do it, a half step if it is too much, and a sheet to tick with a pen.
- A page to find your starting number, so you begin where you are and not where a chart says you should be.
- What to do when it feels like too much, and the signs that are a question for a doctor and not for a guide.
- A food list with the fiber in each serving, gentle foods first, and three sample days at about 20, 25 and 30 grams.

Print it, or keep it on your phone and print only the week you are in.

Why slower gets you there

You decided to eat more fiber. You added beans, bran and a big salad in the same week. By Thursday your stomach was loud and tight, and by the weekend you were back to what you ate before.

That was not you failing at fiber. It was the jump. The bacteria in the gut break fiber down, and gas is part of how they do it. Give them a lot more at once and they make a lot more gas at once. Give them a little more, the same amount every day, and for many people it settles within two or three weeks.

So this guide does the opposite of a challenge. One change a week. The same food at the same meal, every day, until it is boring. Then the next one.

The five rules

- One change a week. Not two. If something feels off, you know which food it was.
- Portion before variety. When a food sits well, make its portion bigger before you add a new food.
- A glass of water with every new fiber food. Fiber holds water, so give it some.
- If it hurts, step back. Go to the half step on that week's page, stay there a week longer, then try again.
- Your comfort sets the pace, not the calendar. Six weeks is the shortest version. Twelve is fine.

What this guide will not do

It will not promise how you will feel in six weeks, because bodies differ. In the small studies where adults ate half a cup of beans a day for 8 to 12 weeks, fewer than half noticed more gas in the first week, and most of those said it had settled by the second or third. A few did not settle in that time. If you are one of them, weeks 1 to 5 reach the usual reference values without beans.

It is also not a treatment for anything. If you have a diagnosed digestive condition, or a diet a doctor gave you, ask them first.

Find your starting number

A guide that starts you at 12 grams and one that starts you at 22 grams should not be the same guide. So look before you change anything.

- Open the free fiber checker at barbaraofnorth.com/checker.
- Add what you ate yesterday, if yesterday was a normal day.
- Write the number here before you forget it.

My starting number	_____ grams a day	Date	

Where to begin

Your number	Start here
Under 15 grams	Week 1, with the half step. Stay on each week for two weeks, not one.
15 to 22 grams	Week 1 as written. This is where most people are.
Over 22 grams	You are close already. Pick the weeks that add a food you do not eat yet, and skip the rest.

The numbers people aim for

These are reference values for adults, set for whole populations. They are not a target you have to hit by a date.

Who says it	How much a day
European Food Safety Authority	25 grams
US Dietary Guidelines	14 grams for every 1,000 calories: about 25 grams for women aged 31 to 50, about 21 grams from 51
UK National Health Service	30 grams
What the average US adult eats	About 17 grams

WEEK 1 OF 6

Breakfast

Give breakfast one fiber food, in a small bowl, and leave everything else as it is.

Choose one, and keep it all week

The change	Fiber it adds
40 g of rolled oats (about half a cup) with a tablespoon of ground flaxseed	about 6 g
Two wholewheat cereal biscuits with your usual milk	about 6 g
40 g of rolled oats with a sliced banana	about 7 g

When	When the kettle goes on in the morning.
With it	A glass of water.
The half step	Half the oats (20 g) and no flaxseed. Stay there for the week.

Oats are one of the gentlest places to start. If a small bowl is uncomfortable, look at what else changed that morning (a new milk, a sweetener, more coffee) before you blame the oats.

Tick it off

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
I did it							
Glass of water							
How it felt: fine, a bit, too much							

At the end of the week

- ☐ It felt fine on most days. I go on to week 2.
- ☐ It was uncomfortable on most days. I take the half step and stay here one more week.
- ☐ Something else changed this week too (a new milk, a sweetener, late dinners). I repeat the week before I decide.

If you started at about 17 grams and picked the smallest option every week, you are now at about 23 grams a day.

THE REST OF THE GUIDE

Weeks 2 to 6, and the pages that go with them

- Week 2: One swap. Swap one white grain you already eat for its wholegrain version. Same meal, same amount.
- Week 3: Fruit, whole. Add one whole fruit a day, with its skin where it has one. Juice does not count: the fiber stays behind in the juicer.
- Week 4: Lentils, a quarter cup. Stir a quarter cup of cooked lentils into a lunch or a dinner you already make: a soup, a salad, a pasta sauce, a rice bowl.
- Week 5: Grow the portion. Do not add a new food. Make last week's portion bigger, or give dinner one more familiar plant.
- Week 6: Beans or seeds. Now the foods most people start with, and stop at. Half a cup of beans with the vegetables at dinner, or a spoon of seeds at breakfast.
- If it feels like too much: the step-back rule, and what to check before you blame the fiber.
- When to ask a doctor: the signs that are not a fiber question.
- The food list: fiber per serving in 43 plant foods, gentle foods first.
- Three sample days at about 20, 25 and 30 grams.

The whole guide is at barbaraofnorth.com/fiber-ramp.

This guide is general information about food. It is not medical advice and it is not made for one person's health. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, under 18, have a diagnosed digestive condition or follow a diet a doctor gave you, talk to your doctor or a registered dietitian before you change how you eat.