

# Seniors Eating Well Snippets

## Module 2 – Fibre and fluids for health

**Setup:** Put the “cue block”, leaflets, and plastic pig for the module on your registration table.

**Explanation for “pass the pig”:** Use answer the fibre question below; have participants stand in a circle and pass to each other. Each time someone catches the pig, they come up with an answer.

Hold up the cue board. *Can you guess what this module is about? Fibre and fluid for health*

- *To keep our digestive system healthy, we need to stay physically active, and we also need two important things in our diet. Can anyone tell what those are? That’s right - fibre and fluid.*

- **Which foods have fibre in them? Let’s pass the pig.**

**Looking for:** plant foods such as vegetables, fruits, wholegrain breads and cereals, wholemeal pasta, brown rice, nuts, seeds, legumes (cooked dried beans, split peas and lentils).

TIP: When buying packaged foods such as bread, breakfast cereal and crackers look for foods that contain >6g fibre / 100g product.

- *If we don’t have enough fibre and fluid, we can become constipated, which as well as being uncomfortable, increases risk of bowel cancer and other bowel diseases. Fibre helps to push everything through our digestive tract and clears away bacteria and debris to keep us healthy. Because fibre acts like a sponge to absorb water and cholesterol it also makes stools softer and helps reduce cholesterol levels.*
- *Optional extra: Did you know that most of us only get about 2/3 of the fibre we need for health and disease prevention? Let’s pass the pig to think of ways to add extra fibre into the diet.*

**Looking for:** Leave skin on fruits and vegetables, add nuts and seeds to breakfast cereal and salads, add legumes to casseroles and soups, use fibre-containing spreads such as bean dip or hummus instead of table spread, eat high fibre snacks such as fruit or vegetable sticks instead of biscuits.

Use this Weetbix analogy to explain why we need fluid for healthy bowels. *Think about your morning Weetbix and how it changes after you pour the milk over it. What happens? That’s right, it becomes soft and puffed up. Now if you imagine a dry Weetbix and a wet one going through your digestive tract – which one do you think would pass through more easily? Right, the wet soft bulky one. That’s why we need plenty of fluids to keep bowel movements soft and prevent constipation.*

### Quiz Questions:

1. How many cups of fluid should we be aiming to drink each day? 4, 6 or 8?

**ANSWER:** 8 (2L) - This includes ALL fluids eg. tea, coffee, water, milk in cereal, soup, liquid-like foods e.g. custard, yoghurt.

As we age our thirst mechanism becomes less efficient so it may not be as obvious if we are dehydrated. Signs of dehydration include dry eyes, sleepiness, skin that lacks turgor (plumpness) and dark urine. Urine will be dark in the morning but by lunchtime this should be straw colour if drinking adequate amounts.

2. Vegetables and fruit are a great source of fibre. But from a nutrient point of view, which is best? Canned, fresh or frozen?

**ANSWER:** They can all be good choices. Straight out of your garden or from a farmer's market would be the freshest, but in winter, often frozen is fresher and can have more nutrients than the "fresh" veggies, which may have spent a long time in transit. Frozen has the advantage of being able to use as much or as little as you want. When buying canned, choose ones with no added salt or sugar. And try to eat veggies and fruit with their skins on for more fibre and vitamins (some canned varieties remove the skins).

3. Does cooking or blending food (as in smoothies or smooth soups) destroy the fibre in it? Yes or no?

**ANSWER:** No - High fibre foods don't have to be raw or crunchy. Cooked and blended foods keep their fibre. However, when foods are blended the fibre is broken down so whilst it still has many benefits such as feeding healthy bacteria in your gut and reducing constipation, it will no longer slow the absorption of glucose from the carbohydrates like intact fibre does. Therefore, your blood sugars will rise more quickly than if you were eating whole fruit or vegetables.

Who got all 3 questions correct?

#### **Application:**

Ask the group: *Who wants to share one thing they will do this week to increase their fluid or fibre intake?*

Get 2-3 people to share.

#### **Handouts:**

- *Are you drinking enough?*
- *Fibre and fluid*
- *Vegetables and fruit*