

# Foot-Long Floaters and Other Important F-Words



Quiz Question: What is hands-down the number one nutrient deficiency on every sanctioned list? If you said protein, vitamin D or Calcium, guess again. Let me give you a hint...it starts with “F” and it makes you fart. You’re *right!* It’s FIBER!

Our lack of dietary fiber is at the root cause for something called metabolic dysfunction—a collection of disorders that is impacting a whopping 93% of our US population! We’re talking about addictions like Insulin Resistance, Type 2 Diabetes, High Cholesterol, Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD), and visceral/organ fat deposition. These labels represent organ failure, the very decline in metabolic function that serves as a downward slippery slope to everything you don’t want at the end of your life: stroke, dementia, heart attack, blindness, limb amputation, liver failure, heart attack, and the list goes on.

How did we get here? In a nutshell, it’s a result of the enormous shift from real food to ultra-processed food.

Pretty sure we all know that our US sugar fest is out of control. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended we cut our sugar consumption by a whopping 75%, but we have flat-out ignored that warning. Only it’s not just the over-indulgence of sweets that is screwing up our metabolism, but the fact that most of the sugar we consume jolts straight into our bloodstream—because it’s missing the secret antidote. You guessed it...Fiber.

Fructose, the sugar in veggies and fruits, was always a bad F-word.... it was never good for our bodies, but so delicious! Fortunately, plant fructose presents itself pre-packaged with its antidotal sidekick...fiber! It’s not until we extracted sugar from the plant (and threw the fiber away) that we began to get in trouble. Straight-up sugar simply bombards the pancreases to produce an immediate surge of insulin. Insulin’s job is to help clear the sugar from the bloodstream—mostly by escorting it into our fat storage. Over time, the insulin factory (the pancreas) burns out. That’s right, the continual consumption of carbs (think *any* kind of sugar and *any* kind of flour), without fiber drastically increases our risk level of insulin resistance, pre-diabetes and diabetes. Meanwhile our overconsumption of fructose (remember high-fructose corn syrup) taxes our liver and can stimulate non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Fiber to the rescue! When you eat vegetables, fruits, nuts or whole grains, the fiber stays contained in your GI tract: the tube from your mouth to the

poop-shoot. It is not absorbed into the body. It absorbs water and begins to swell. Think of straw or hay as analogy. It sucks up water and makes a gelatinous goo that allows the sugar in the plant to be absorbed.

*V e r y s l o w l y*—allowing the pancreas to keep pace and emit tiny spurts of responsive insulin (instead of big-ass surges).

In case you’ve wondered why fiber has been labeled a *pre-biotic*(versus pro-biotic), this slow release of sugar allows some of it to reach duodenum where it feeds and stimulates good gut bacteria.

Fiber is also *filling!* It fends off your hunger while allowing you to regain sensitivity to your hunger hormones (Leptin and Ghrelin). In so doing, adequate fiber intakes allow us to move away from “portion control” as a weight loss strategy. Let’s face it, that trend was never any fun!

What’s a good measure of enough dietary fiber? The proof is in the toilet. You’re looking for *foot-long floaters*” (a.k.a. FLFs), in other words light, fluffy poops—with no gut pain, diarrhea, constipation, bloating or bloody stools. Warning: when you teach your children to aspire to produce **FLFs**, don’t be surprised if they occasionally invite you into the bathroom to celebrate their outcomes!

As a health goal, aim for a minimum of 38g of dietary fiber a day—including at least 5 full cups of veggies and fruits. Sadly, only 24% of adult Americans eat *half* that recommended value. (FYI: Children’s requirements are 19g for ages 1-3, 25g for ages 4-8 and 31g for ages 9-13.)

One final word. If you’re trying to lose body fat, try bumping fiber up to 50g/day—about a basketball-size equivalent of veggies and fruits a day. It will drive out your hunger for fiber-less high-calorie foods altogether. And if you are *super* serious about weight loss, make 80% of that fiber consumption vegetables.

Get on the FLF bandwagon. Your future health is worth it!



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