



# FIBER IN THE DIET

Good colon health requires enough of the right kinds of fiber to make sure there is enough bulk in the stool. The colon pushes its contents along by squeezing (“peristalsis”). If the contents are bulky the colon has to squeeze less, with less pressure and cramps. (Your colon is like a tube of toothpaste: if it is full the contents come out easily without much pressure. If it is almost empty, it has to squeeze hard and the tube becomes all cramped and gnarly).

Another reason for fiber is to keep water in your colon. Normally, water one drinks comes out as urine, unless something keeps it in the colon. That something is bran type fiber. Bran holds more water in your colon than any other food. If there already is a lot of water in the colon – from diarrhea – bran will soak it up and it will make the stool soft and bulky.

If there is not enough bran type fiber in the colon, the colon may squeeze so hard to push things along that it may cause painful cramps. The pressure may blow out little pouches in the weak parts of the colon (called diverticulosis) or cause blood vessels near the anus to be pumped up and to possibly bleed (called hemorrhoids). The lack of fiber often causes constipation, pellet like hard stool, and even occasionally diarrhea (as the colon squeezes so hard it squeezes out small amounts of liquid).

Other types of fiber besides bran are healthy and will help prevent heart disease and cancer. None of them, however, is as effective as bran in increasing stool bulk. Even vegetarians, who eat lots of other fibers, will get diverticulosis, hemorrhoids, constipation etc., unless they eat bran type fibers.

## 1. **BRAN** –

Unprocessed (“Millers”) wheat bran or oat bran can be obtained in a health food store or a supermarket. It is an almost tasteless, gritty substance, which comes in bulk and should cost about 50 cents a pound. Adding several (1-5) rounded tablespoonfuls to your favorite cold or hot cereal (or to other recipes) **EVERYDAY** will produce larger soft easy-to-pass bowel movements. An alternative method is to eat a bowl of commercial cereal each day with at least 8-10 grams per serving of fiber (e.g., all-bran or raisin-bran), but that will be more expensive in the long run.

## 2. **Psyllium seed** – bran substitute.

(<sup>TM</sup>Metamucil, Citrucel, Konsyl, Effersyllium, Modane, Syllamalt, Per Diem Fiber, Hydrocil Instant and many others). These powders are taken and mixed in water, fruit juices, other liquids or as directed on their labels. A rounded tablespoon or two in 8 oz. of liquid twice a day is an average dose. This is larger than the dose on the label and should be taken **EVERYDAY**.

It may take a week or longer for the stool to become soft and regular. For this effect to continue, the intake of the extra fiber must be continued. Some people notice that bran causes excess gas. This almost always disappears within a few weeks. Expect to have about two bowel movements a day.