

## **What is bran fiber and why do we need it?**

Bran, which is high in fiber, is needed in a humans diet. It is best to be used in moderation to gain the positive health it promotes.

Bran is one of the richest sources of dietary fiber it is the indigestible outer husk of wheat, rice, oats and other cereal grains. At one time most bran was thrown out when grains were milled. Until the 1960's when scientist published several reports which stated that bran and other types of fiber could prevent heart attacks, intestinal disorders, and cancers of the breast, colon, prostate and uterus. They developed these reports by studying rural Africans. These studies showed that diseases were rare among these people due to the large consumption of whole grains. Because of these reports and huge media attention, in the 1970's bran became the fad. Huge amounts of bran were being added to everything. Bran was being added to bread, cereals, muffins, meat loaf and even baked apples.

Since this time researchers have learned more and more about the health benefits and hazards of using raw bran. They also have discovered that various types of bran have different properties and different functions. Researchers have studied wheat bran and determined that it is mostly insoluble, although it absorbs large amounts of water. When it is used in moderation, fibers help prevent constipation. But when used in excessive amounts can cause bloating and intestinal gas.

Wheat bran when used properly in a high-fiber diet can help prevent intestinal disorders, also because it helps prevent constipation; bran may also benefit people suffering from hemorrhoids. Oat bran is another valuable source of bran. Oat bran is loaded with soluble fiber, which is sticky and combines with water to form a thick gel. Researchers have reported that oat bran helps reduce blood cholesterol levels. It also improves the glucose metabolism for people with diabetes. This helps in reducing the need for insulin and other medications.

Researchers have also reported that rice bran also reduces cholesterol level. They are not sure if the benefit comes from the fiber in the bran or from the oil that is in the rice. All types of bran, as well as other high-fiber foods, play an important role in weight control by promoting a feeling of fullness without overeating. This may explain why people whose diets are high in fiber are lower at risk for obesity-related cancers and heart attacks.

When the reports about the benefits of bran were first published, people did not use common sense and used bran in excess amounts. People started adding three, four, and even more tablespoons of raw bran to their daily diets. Researchers quickly discovered that this caused aggravation to the bowels, which produced the inflammatory bowel disease. This is a condition in which the colon is inflamed and is inflicted with small ulcers. Also, the acid in raw bran enables the body's absorption of calcium, iron, zinc, magnesium, and other important minerals. There have been several reports of severe bowel obstruction in people who have consumed large amount of bran. Researchers have decided that instead of taking raw bran, eat whole grain breads, cereals and other products that contain bran. These foods taste a lot better than raw bran and are more nutritionally beneficial.

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