

Fueling the Fit Pup – How Fiber Boosts Endurance and Gut Health

Just like humans, pets also need some dietary fiber for optimal digestive health. Here are strategies to make sure you're doing it properly.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dietary fiber comes in two types. Soluble fiber dissolves in water and aids nutrient absorption, while insoluble fiber adds bulk and promotes smooth digestion
- Fiber provides multiple health benefits for pets. It promotes regular bowel movements, supports weight management, nourishes beneficial gut bacteria, and helps stabilize blood sugar levels
- Unlike humans, dogs and cats require only small quantities, as excess fiber can harm their digestive function and overall health
- Safe fiber-loaded vegetables you can share with your pet include dandelion greens, asparagus, green beans, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, and dark leafy greens like arugula, endive, and escarole
- Gradual introduction is essential. Add a teaspoon of vegetables per 10 pounds of body weight daily, or use supplements like psyllium husk powder

As a pet parent, you're always thinking about how to keep your furry friend healthy and happy. While plenty of exercise, routine vet visits, and tasty, nutritious meals are important, one crucial part of your pet's diet might surprise you, dietary fiber.^{1,2,3}

Dietary Fiber for Pets Explained

Dietary fiber, also known as roughage, is a type of carbohydrate found in plants that is not completely digested by stomach enzymes. Instead, whatever remains travels through your pet's digestive system. There are two main types of fiber:

- **Soluble fiber** — Dissolves in water and helps absorb nutrients and water in the digestive tract.
- **Insoluble fiber** — Doesn't dissolve but helps move food smoothly through your pet's digestive system, adding bulk to their stool.

How Dietary Fiber Keeps Your Pet Healthy

The interesting thing about dietary fiber is that its indigestible components help optimize the digestive function of pets:

- **Smooth digestion and regularity** — Insoluble fiber prevents constipation by helping stool move smoothly through the intestines. At the same time, soluble fiber absorbs excess water, which helps reduce diarrhea. This balance helps your pet avoid discomfort and keeps bathroom breaks regular and predictable.
- **Weight management** — If your pet tends to overeat or needs to lose a little weight, fiber is your ally. It helps your pet feel full without eating extra calories. This means your furry friend can manage their weight without constantly feeling hungry.
- **Nourishes healthy bacteria** — Soluble fiber acts as food for the beneficial bacteria in your pet's gut (also known as prebiotics). These aid in digestion and support a robust immune system, highlighting the role of fiber in supporting overall health.
- **Stabilizes blood sugar levels** — Fiber slows the digestion, preventing rapid spikes and drops in blood sugar. This steady release of energy is particularly beneficial for pets prone to diabetes or metabolic disorders, helping to maintain their energy levels throughout the day.

How Much Fiber Does Your Pet Need?

While humans generally benefit from having more fiber in their diet, dogs and cats do not. They only need a small amount to maximize the benefits, and too much can be detrimental to digestive function. If your pet produces small, firm stools, they're likely getting the right amount of dietary fiber.

Pets that regularly eat processed, shelf-stable diets are highly likely to benefit from additional dietary fiber. That said, several commercially available raw, fresh food diets also cause constipation because they lack fiber. So, be sure to review the fiber content for that as well.

Ideally, home-prepared species-appropriate diets should have low-glycemic, fibrous veggies to meet your pet's minimal dietary fiber requirements. Not only that, but these veggies also provide crucial antioxidants, polyphenols, and other nutrients that are not typically found in protein sources such as meat, bones, and organs. Here are some veggies to help you get started:

- Dandelion greens
- Jerusalem artichokes, sliced
- Asparagus, steamed and sliced
- Minced Brussels sprouts, steamed
- Culinary mushrooms (those you find at the grocery store)
- Dark leafy greens (arugula, endive, and escarole)
- Green beans
- Broccoli and broccoli sprouts

Be sure to stick with the suggestions above, as not all vegetables are safe for animals to eat. Avoid feeding your pet onions, chives, leeks, and other members of the vegetable family. Interestingly, garlic is safe for pets and is one of the best fresh food toppers thanks to its anticarcinogenic compounds. To serve garlic to your pet, chop and crush it to activate allicin production, then follow these serving suggestions below:

- 10 to 15 pounds — 1/2 clove

- 20 to 40 pounds — 1 clove
- 45 to 70 pounds — 1 1/2 cloves
- 75 to 90 pounds — 2 cloves
- 100 pounds and over — 2 1/2 cloves

How to Gradually Add Fiber to Your Pet's Diet

Now that you know the importance of dietary fiber, how do you give it to your pet? The best way is to incorporate the vegetables mentioned above into their meal, adding about 1 teaspoon for every 10 pounds of body weight served once or twice a day.

If your pet won't eat veggies, consider using supplements, specifically psyllium husk powder. Give your pet half a teaspoon for every 10 pounds of body weight, once or twice a day. Another alternative is coconut or organic acacia fiber, give 1 teaspoon for every 10 pounds of body weight, once or twice daily.

Your pet may benefit from slippery elm bark if they continue to produce narrow, loose stools. When this fiber combines with your pet's digestive juices, it results in mucilage, which is a gel-like material that coats their gastrointestinal tract and helps add bulk to the stool. A half-teaspoon serving for every 10 pounds of body weight per meal should create noticeable results.

Special Considerations for Senior Pets

As your pets age, their dietary needs also change. Older pets sometimes need more fiber to help prevent constipation and maintain a healthy weight, especially as they become less active. However, in some cases, senior pets may require less fiber if they struggle to absorb nutrients effectively. Regular check-ups will help determine the perfect balance for your pet.

Above All Else, Check Your Pet's Poop Regularly

Ultimately, it's crucial you monitor your pet's poop regularly to watch out for potential digestive issues. If you find that their poop is too hard or infrequent, try adding some more fiber and observe the changes.

Regularly monitoring your pet's stool helps you adjust their diet as needed. When in doubt, always consult your veterinarian to find the ideal dietary balance for your furry companion.

Sources and References

¹ [FitBark, April 18, 2025](#)

² [AKC, July 13, 2023](#)

³ [Chewy, April 30, 2025](#)
