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**LIA Lifestyle Instruction Aid**

**a4. Fibre and Bowel TRANSIT Time**

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Modified March 6, 2008

Fibre is needed to stretch the walls of our intestines by filling them up and thereby causing normal peristaltic movements to increase. Peristaltic movements are the contractions of the intestines that moves food along. This is how food moves through the intestines and how constipation is avoided. Constipation is thought to lead to toxins in foods and toxins in the Liver secretions in bile, from staying in contact with intestinal wall cells for too long a time and thus, predisposing these cells to cancer development.

**Bowel Transit Time (BTT)**

How do you know if you need more fibre in your diet? Well, most people do need more fibre in their diets. If you want to test your BTT, you can follow this rule of thumb. It should normally take about 24 hours for food to go through your digestive system.

To test whether you have one or two days of food inside your 'tummy' you can eat some sunflower seeds without chewing them very much. If you don't chew them then they will go right through your intestines undigested and you will see them in your stools. During a dinner meal eat a handful or so, of sunflower seeds without chewing, and mark on a piece of paper the date and time. This is important so you don't have to remember when you took them.

Begin to watch your stools, and when you first see the sunflower seeds in your stools, write the time and date down and calculate your bowel transit time.

Fibre is pretty simple to understand. It is anything that cannot be digested. The cellulose wrappings Mother Nature puts around seeds, kernels and vegetable cells in plants and fruits, are all good fibre. There are different kinds of fibre in different fruits and vegetables, but you don't really need to know about all that with regard to the soluble and insoluble kinds.

Keep in mind that meats offer practically no fibre content for us. They may make you feel full, but it is the fat in them doing this. Even in lean cuts of meat, it is the fat that makes you feel full. The meat protein is almost completely digested leaving practically no fibre behind.

Newer research has shown that fibre does not cause a loss of minerals like calcium or magnesium, as was thought in the past. If we stick to the KISS principle ( Keep it Simple & Straight forward), all we have to remember is to eat some foods every day that give us fibre. These high fibre foods are usually fruits and vegetables. Cooking vegetables will reduce the fibre content a little. This is why we are told to eat raw vegetables as well as cooked ones. Raw fruits and vegetables also give us fresh enzymes that have not been destroyed by cooking.