

These Healthy Japanese Noodles Are High Fiber and NO-CARBS (Plus They Taste Really Good!)



Photo by : Máirín | Flickr

By Dr. Joseph Mercola | mercola.com

One of the fastest ways to destroy your health is to eat a diet high in net carbs and protein and low in healthy fats. Considering the fact that 80 percent of Americans are insulin resistant and eat in this way, it's no surprise that [obesity rates](#) are on a steady climb.

While no one diet is perfect for everyone, as a general rule, most people could benefit by restricting net carbs (total carbs minus fiber) to less than 50 grams per day. If you exercise a lot or are very active, you might be able to

increase it to 100 grams.

[Related Article: How To Make Super Healthy Pasta With Fresh Veggie “Noodles”](#)

For example, grains, rice, pasta, potatoes and vegetables are all carbohydrates. However, because vegetables are so high in fiber, they're very low in net carbs. This is why you can eat virtually unlimited amounts of veggies on a low-carb diet. It's really the *fiber content* that differentiates “good” carbs from the “bad.”

To determine your net carbs, simply subtract the fiber from the total carbs, and that's your total non-fiber or “net” carbs.

Shirataki Noodles – An Exceptional High-Fiber Food

Vegetables aren't the only high-fiber food though. A food you may never have heard of is shirataki noodles, which may be the epitome of a low net carb food, containing about 97 percent water and 3 percent fiber, zero calories, and no digestible carbs.

They're long, white, and translucent noodles, sometimes referred to as konjac noodles or miracle noodles. They're made from glucomannan fiber from the root of the konjac plant (aka devil's tongue yam). As explained by Authority Nutrition:¹

“Glucomannan is a highly viscous fiber. Viscous fiber is a type of soluble fiber, and one of its main characteristics is the ability to absorb water and form a gel. In fact, glucomannan can absorb up to 50 times its weight in water, as reflected in shirataki noodles' extremely high water content.

These noodles move through the digestive system very slowly, which helps you feel full and delays nutrient absorption into

the bloodstream. In addition, viscous fiber functions as a prebiotic. It nourishes the bacteria living in your colon, also known as the gut flora or microbiome."

The Importance of Fiber for Health

The microbes in your body consume the same foods you do, and as a general rule, the beneficial ones tend to feed on foods that are known to benefit health, and vice versa.

Some of the microbes in your gut specialize in fermenting soluble fiber found not only in shirataki noodles but also in fruits and vegetables, and the byproducts of this fermenting activity help nourish the cells lining your colon. This helps prevent health problems associated with leaky gut syndrome.

[Related Article: How Probiotics & High Fiber Help Combat Malnutrition](#)

The most important fermentation byproducts are short-chain fatty acids like butyrate, propionate, and acetate. These short-chain fats:

- Help nourish and recalibrate your immune system, thereby helping to prevent inflammatory disorders such as asthma and Crohn's disease^{2,3}
- Increase specialized immune cells called T regulatory cells, which help prevent autoimmune responses. Via a process called hematopoiesis, they're also involved in the formation of other types of blood cells in your body
- Serve as easy substrates for your liver to produce ketones that efficiently fuel your mitochondria and serve as important and powerful metabolic signals
- Stimulate the release of a gut hormone known as peptide YY (PYY), which increases satiety, meaning it helps you feel fuller⁴
- Butyrate in particular affects gene expression and

induces apoptosis (normal programmed cell death), thereby decreasing your risk of colon cancer

Leaky Gut Is Real, and a Major Contributor to Chronic Disease

Unfortunately, few Americans get the recommended 30 to 32 grams of fiber per day, and when fiber is lacking, it starves these beneficial bacteria, thereby setting your health into a downward spiral.

In the past, there have been questions about whether leaky gut syndrome is a “real” condition or not. Recent research⁵ has confirmed the reality of leaky gut, showing that, indeed, physical gaps between the cells that line your intestinal barrier can develop, allowing undigested food particles into your blood stream.

A gut protein called zonulin regulates the opening and closing of these holes in the cell wall of your intestine. When a gap develops, larger molecules such as food particles can get through, thereby causing allergic reactions and other problems such as type-1 diabetes, Celiac disease, and irritable bowel syndrome.

It can also contribute to neurological problems. For example, research by Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride has revealed that nearly all mothers of autistic children have [abnormal gut flora](#). This is significant because newborns inherit their gut flora from their mothers at the time of birth.

Gut dysfunction is also a factor in depression and various behavioral problems, both in children and adults.

Health Benefits of Glucomannan

Glucomannan – the fiber found in shirataki noodles – has been linked to a number of health benefits, including:

- Weight loss. Research has shown that taking glucomannan before eating a high-carb meal reduces levels of the “hunger hormone” ghrelin. When taken daily for one month, it also reduced fasting ghrelin levels
- Reduced blood sugar and insulin levels
- Lowered cholesterol levels, in part by increasing the amount of cholesterol excreted in the stool, leaving less to be reabsorbed into your bloodstream. One meta-analysis found glucomannan lowered LDL cholesterol by an average of 16 mg/dL and triglycerides by an average of 11 mg/dl⁶
- Constipation relief and improved bowel movements

Shirataki Noodles Are a Resistant Starch

Fiber is typically classified as either soluble or insoluble. However, other properties, such as fermentability, are of greater importance when it comes to actual health benefits.

As noted in Today’s Dietitian,⁷ “Naturally occurring resistant starches are a group of low-viscous fibers that are slowly fermented in the large intestine. As their name suggests, resistant starches are starches that resist digestion in the small intestine.”

They’re the types of fiber that act as prebiotics, feeding healthy bacteria in your gut. Because resistant starches are fermented very slowly, they won’t make you gassy, allowing you to eat far more of them without suffering discomfort.

They also add significant bulk to your stools, and help you maintain regular bowel movements. Since they're not digested, resistant starches also do not result in blood sugar spikes.

Research also suggests resistant starches⁸ help improve insulin regulation, reducing your risk of insulin resistance. Interest in resistant starches is so high, scientists are even looking at ways to engineer plants and other foods to produce or incorporate them.⁹ As noted by Time Magazine:¹

“Those benefits – getting digested slower, being converted into fatty acids and sustaining colonies of gut bacteria – set resistant starch apart.

Resistant starch is being explored as a healthy food for people with type 2 diabetes; eating it improved certain measures of inflammation, a condition that often precedes type 2 diabetes, and lipid profiles in women with the condition, showed one 2015 study.¹¹

‘Certain populations and cultures have been benefiting from resistant starches for a long time,’ says Paul Arciero, professor in the Health and Exercise Sciences department of Skidmore College. ‘In my belief, that’s what’s protected them against some of the ravages of the more modern-day high carbohydrate diet.’

Examples of foods high in resistant starch¹² include underripe banana, rolled oats, white beans, lentils, seeds, and products like potato starch, tapioca starch, and brown rice flour. Interestingly, cooking a normally digestible starch such as potato or pasta and then cooling it in the refrigerator will alter the chemistry of the food, transforming more of it into resistant-type starch.¹³

Cooking With Shirataki Noodles

Shirataki noodles are a prime example of a resistant starch. High in fiber with no digestible carbs, they not only benefit your gut microbiome but also help you lose weight and ward off conditions like [diabetes](#) and colon cancer. The noodles, which are virtually tasteless on their own, readily take on the flavor of whatever seasoning or sauce you use.

Many enjoy their consistency, and the fact that they won't stick together like regular wheat pasta noodles. They're also a great "convenience food," as they require very little preparation. To eat cold, simply drain, rinse (this will remove most of the konjac root odor, which has a slight fishy smell), and dress with your favorite seasoning.

For a hot meal, you can add them to a pot of broth (homemade broth would be ideal), which will allow the noodles to soak up the flavor of the broth. If you want a more regular noodle texture, heat them in an ungreased skillet for a few minutes. This will evaporate some of the water in the noodles, removing some of that mushy, gel-like consistency.

Serious Eats¹⁴ and Authority Nutrition¹⁵ offer some recipes and simple tips for cooking with shirataki noodles. You can also find all sorts of recipes on YouTube. While they're ideal for Asian recipes, they can replace rice or pasta in just about any dish.

Increasing Your Fiber Intake May Help Prolong Your Life

Mounting research suggests that a [high-fiber diet](#) can help reduce your risk of premature death from any cause, likely because it helps to reduce your risk of a number of chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke,

and cancer. Again, these benefits are in part due to the fermenting action of certain beneficial microbes in your intestine, and the health-promoting byproducts produced from this process.

[Avoiding sugar](#) and processed food is equally important, as they promote the growth of fungi and other harmful microbes that can easily take over, given half a chance. The nice thing about shirataki noodles is that they're ALL fiber and NO digestible carb at all. In essence, they're a perfect no-net-carb pasta replacement you can enjoy in generous amounts.

[Related Article: This Delicious High-Fiber Root Vegetable Boosts Immunity and Aids Weight Loss](#)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends getting 14 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories consumed. I believe about 25 to 50 grams per 1,000 calories consumed is probably a better goal. A more general recommendation is to make sure you get 20 to 30 grams of fiber per day. Besides shirataki noodles, other healthy sources of soluble and insoluble fiber include:

Psyllium seed husk, flax hemp, and chia seeds	Berries	Vegetables such as broccoli and Brussels sprouts
Root vegetables and tubers, including onions, sweet potatoes , and jicama	Macadamia nuts	Peas
Green beans	Cauliflower	Beans

[Read more great articles at mercola.com](#)