

PHARMACEUTICAL DIETARY FIBRE PREPARATIONS : THEIR  
CONTRIBUTION TO DAILY DIETARY FIBRE INTAKE

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Several pharmaceutical products containing pectin, bran or hydrophilic plant gums are consumed as a means of increasing the daily intake of dietary fibre. We have carried out the chemical analysis of the fibre components in these products to assess the possible effects of their use. Some of these data are given in the Table.

Product name	Stated source of fibre	Dietary fibre content per average daily dose of product (g)	Pentosan content per average daily dose of product (g)
Fibyrax	Grain and citrus extract.	1.6	0.77
Fybogel	Ispaghula husk.	7.0	5.8
Fybranta	Bran.	5.2	3.6
Granocol	Bassorit and cortex frangulae.	4.8	0.16
Metamucil	Psyllium hydrophilic mucilloid.	12.1	11.2
Normocol	Sterculia and frangula.	4.7	0.17

These products are likely to be consumed in conjunction with a diet typically providing between 15g (Barasi et al. 1983) and 23g (Southgate et al. 1978) of dietary fibre each day.

Their regular use would increase dietary fibre intake to between 16.6 and 35.1g per day depending on the product and on diet. It has been estimated that a diet containing at least 37g of dietary fibre per day may be protective against some chronic diseases (Kromhout et al. 1982). Therefore it would appear that the regular use of these products would not raise the fibre intake to protective levels when used at the dose levels recommended by the manufacturers.

Some products are used because of their purported laxative properties. Dietary fibre from food has been shown to modify colonic function resulting in greater faecal bulk. This bulking effect is beneficial in some colonic disorders and has been correlated with the pentosan fraction of dietary fibre (Cummings et al. 1978). The amount of pentosans in the pharmaceutical preparations varies widely and their effect on faecal bulking may also be expected to vary widely. Those that contribute little to the total pentosan intake of an individual may not be as effective in stool bulking.

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