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Lectins Free Diet

Lectins are proteins in plants that have been associated with both positive and negative health effects. Some plant-based foods, such as beans and legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds and certain vegetables contain a high amount of lectins.

Lectins are a type of protein that, in humans, may help cells interact with one another. Some scientists also believe that lectins provide a form of defense in plants to keep insects away. These proteins also contain nitrogen, which is needed for plants to grow. While many parts of plants contain lectins, the seed is the part that people eat most often. Lectins may impact health in multiple ways, ranging from digestive disturbances (a dysbiotic condition of the gut) to chronic disease risk (inflammation and autoimmune disease including: celiac disease, psoriasis, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, MS and Parkinson's Disease to name a few). They have also been shown to cause red blood cells to cluster together thus not carrying the nutrients and oxygen to our cells this can cause malnutrition although our diet is varied and plentiful. Lectins are categorized as anti-nutrients since they block the absorption of some nutrients.

Lectins may cause an upset stomach when plant foods are eaten uncooked. They are also the reason why it can be dangerous to eat undercooked legumes. The lectins in red kidney beans is called phytohaemagglutinin is responsible for red kidney bean poisoning, which results from eating raw or undercooked kidney beans. According to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), consuming just four raw kidney beans could cause symptoms including severe nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Cooking methods that first soaking for 4 to 8 hours: beans, legumes, non-gluten grains such as quinoa or rice, nuts and seed, then use moist heat and cook at high temperature are helpful for decreasing the number of lectins in plants. Cooking also breaks down some plant starch into simpler carbohydrates. Lectins like to attach to carbohydrates and are removed from the body before they cause negative effects. Slow cookers are not recommended for preparing kidney beans because the temperature is not high enough to eliminate lectins. Ways to decrease lectins in foods include: boiling, fermentation, sprouting, peeling, deseeding and pressure cooking.

While lectins have some undesirable effects, they also have some positive ones. Small amounts of lectins may help the good bacteria that live in human digestive systems. Research suggests that lectins may be useful for helping to identify and diagnose cancer. Lectins are also being studied for their potential to slow down the rate that cancer cells multiply. Researchers are even looking at lectins as potential treatments for illnesses caused by bacteria, fungi, and viruses.

What is the lectins-free diet?

A lectins-free diet may be difficult for vegetarians or vegans to follow, since legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains provide plant-based protein. Legumes, whole grains, and fruit and vegetable peels also provide dietary fiber. A lectins-free diet could result in constipation if dietary fiber intake decreases. Also, following a lectins-free diet may be expensive, as the plan recommends specialty milks, pasture-raised meats, and expensive supplements. According to Dr. Gundry, the following foods are recommended for people trying to limit their lectins intake:

Thermo-Tech Inc. P.O. Box 891 Knights Ferry CA 95361-2091 (209) 881-3044

Website: www.HealthyBreasts.Info - Email: drnancygardner@yahoo.com

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Lectins Free Foods

Pasture-raised meats, A2 milk from grass fed cows on non-GMO grains, cooked sweet potatoes and yams, leafy, green vegetables Bok Choy, Napa Cabbage, kale, chard, spinach, cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts, asparagus, garlic and onion, celery, mushrooms, avocado, artichoke, okra, carrots, olives or extra virgin olive oil.

High Lectins Foods To Avoid

Legumes, such as beans, peas, lentils, and peanuts, squash, nightshade vegetables such as: eggplant, peppers, potatoes, and tomatoes, fruit, although in-season fruit is allowed in moderation. Nuts from trees, corn, meat from corn-fed animals, A1 milk. Avoid all grains including corn, wheat, barley, oats etc. but rice, quinoa or millet which are low in gluten can be consumed by soaking the whole grain until sprouted, pour off the water and cook with fresh water really well. This process applies to beans and legumes too. It is not considered lectins free but it does eliminate the amount of lectins. Keep in mind that the part of the plants that have the most lectins is the skin and seeds. So for example peeling the cucumber and scooping seeds out will really help.

Conclusions: While lectins may cause some damage, there is strong research to support the benefits of eating plant foods. Many plants are high in lectins, but lectins levels can differ significantly between plant types. There are also many kinds of lectins, and some seem to be beneficial. It is also important to be aware that much of the research on lectins has been via animal or test-tube studies. Furthermore, many studies have looked at single lectins instead of the foods that contain them. More research is needed before following a lectins-free diet can be recommended. At this time, it seems to be more of a trend than a plan backed by science.

This article is intended to educate as to the various options available to heal the body and in no way is intended to take the place of a doctor's advice or treatment of disease.

LECTIN SHIELD - Dr. Gundry's research on lectins and the damage to this gut has helped so many this is the product to restore gut integrity and aid in repairing damage when eating foods with Lectins. This along with a digestive enzyme with lipase, amylase, protease, and cellulase as well as a broad spectrum pro-biotic with: acidophilus, lactobacillus, bifida and bulgarius.



About the Author: Nancy Gardner-Heaven TMT is board certified as a technician of Medical Thermology, at Auburn University by the American Academy of Thermology. After Studying to be a surgical nurse at Stanford University, she continued her education in Nutrition and Preventing Disease at The America College of Advancement in Medicine. She has been offering classes on the prevention of disease at San Francisco State University, UC Berkeley and the University of Hawaii at Hilo for the last 15 years. She is currently the director of Thermo-Tech Inc. offering Breast and Full Body Thermography Screening in the numerous locations for the last 25 years.