

Lectins

What are lectins?

- Lectins are proteins that bind to carbohydrates.
- They are found in plants.
- Lectins are part of a plant's defense system.

There have been studies linked to both positive and negative health effects when it comes to lectins and some experts promote the idea of a lectin free diet, however current research does not support this claim that a lectin free diet could be more beneficial on a whole.

There is some basis though, that reducing lectins and also cooking them properly is beneficial for some people who struggle to digest them.

Foods that are high in lectins are:

- All legumes such as lentils, beans, peas, chickpeas, peanuts
- nightshade vegetables such as white potatoes, tomatoes, aubergine, bell peppers
- wheat grains, some psuedo grains like quinoa
- cashews
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Some lectins can be harmful. For example, the lectin called **phytohaemagglutinin** found in red kidney beans causes red blood cells to clump together. Consuming just four raw or under cooked red kidney beans can cause red kidney bean poisoning which can be very dangerous. [\[1\]](#).

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Some people can have a lack of certain digestive enzymes or enzymes that do not function properly and this can cause nutrient deficiencies as the body cannot break down the lectins as normally, lectins attach themselves to carbohydrates and leave the body. Lectins contain antinutrients which can hinder the absorption of nutrients. [\[2\]](#).

When you have a problem digesting lectins

Once again, Please note that I am not advocating a lectin free diet. However, it is important to note that there are people, like myself, who find lectins to be a problem. This could be due to impaired function or lack of certain digestive enzymes that aid in the breakdown of these lectins.

What is also noteworthy is that studies have shown that lectins can bind to gut lining cells, causing cell damage, and in turn this can cause leaky gut, allowing antigens to enter the immune system. This is a problem if you are already suffering from leaky gut.

Which is why knowing about lectins is very important, because if you are trying to heal your gut, consuming foods high in lectins at this stage might not be advisable. (again: please always speak to the relevant health professional when it comes to making dietary choices) [\[3\]](#).

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There are certain things you can do to assist the digestive process by reducing the lectin content:

- **Soaking** legumes, beans and peas for long periods reduces the lectin content
- **boil or stewing** legumes on high heat helps to get rid of a lot of the lectins.
- **sprouting and fermenting** are also methods to reduce high lectin content.

Why it is good to know what works for YOU personally

Should you find you are experiencing high levels of inflammation, digestive issues, bloating, gas, or any other digestive related symptom after eating foods containing lectins, to investigate further.

This is highly recommended if you are gluten sensitive, or have discovered you have leaky gut due to Celiac disease.