

# 10 Tips To Reduce Bloating and Discomfort from Beans and Lentils



**PLANT-BASED**  
Health Professionals UK

Promoting Sustainable Health and Nutrition

**Rohini Bajekal, Nutritionist and Board-Certified Lifestyle Medicine Professional**

**Legumes include beans, lentils, split peas, soya beans and chickpeas. These are heart healthy, cholesterol-lowering, protein and fibre-rich foods. With fewer than 1 in 10 UK adults getting the recommended 30g of fibre, these are foods we should all incorporate into our diet. Here are some tips to make it easier**

**1.**

## **INTRODUCE BEANS AND LENTILS GRADUALLY. START WITH SMALLER LENTILS FIRST**

When introducing legumes it's best to take it slow so your gut bacteria can adjust to the increase in dietary fibre. Start with a tablespoon at a time and *build up the amount over the course of a few months.*

**2.**

## **RINSE CANNED BEANS AND LENTILS**

Ensure you *thoroughly drain and rinse* legumes to remove the water containing indigestible carbohydrates (aquafaba). This can lead to gas-induced discomfort. As canned beans can also be high in sodium, the rinsing method can help remove excess sodium. Choose *canned beans with no salt added if possible.*

**3.**

## **SOAK BEANS AND LENTILS OVERNIGHT AND SPROUT BEFORE COOKING THEM**

*Soaking* beans and lentils from scratch is healthier, saves money and can potentially reduce bloating too. Soak beans and lentils for *6-10 hours* in room temperature water to reduce cooking time. Ensure you *discard* the soaking water. *Sprouting* legumes before cooking them is a wonderful way to increase nutrient absorption (including protein digestibility).

**4.**

## **COOK BEANS AND LENTILS UNTIL SOFT - EASY TO MASH WITH A FORK**

Undercooking beans and lentils will not break down the lectins present and *could lead to you feeling unwell.* Cook them until they're so soft you could easily mash them.

**5.**

## **EAT MINDFULLY AND CHEW EACH MOUTHFUL THOROUGHLY**

Digestion starts in the mouth. *Sit down and try to eat slowly without distractions* such as phones and television screens. *Enjoy the experience of eating* and take a moment to savour the textures and flavours of your meal.

**6.**

## **ENJOY HERBS & SPICES**

Most herbs and spices contain a variety of *antioxidants, flavonoids, and other beneficial phytonutrients.* Cumin seeds or ground cumin helps with digestion and is perfect in a soup, curry or dal (lentil dish). Carom seeds, fennel seeds, turmeric and peppermint are other great *digestive aids.* Cooking beans with a large strip of *dried kombu*, a Japanese dried kelp, may minimise their gas-producing properties too.

**7.**

## **TRY ASAFOETIDA**

This strong-smelling spice, often known as "hing", offers *relief from stomach gas.* Add a small pinch to dal or khichadi - a rice and lentil dish. Asafoetida is also a great low FODMAP alternative to onion and garlic. *Asafoetida should be avoided in pregnancy (or if you are trying to get pregnant) as it may induce nausea and vomiting, especially if one is not used to it.*

**8.**

## **GRATE GINGER**

Ginger soothes the muscles of the digestive tract and has *anti-inflammatory properties.* Grate 1 tablespoon into your bean and lentil dishes. You could also try sipping on a *fresh ginger tea* after eating a fibre-rich meal.

**9.**

## **DRINK ENOUGH WATER AS YOU INCREASE THE FIBRE IN YOUR DIET**

As fibre draws water into the bowel, *you could get dehydrated if you aren't drinking enough fluid.* Staying hydrated helps fibre to do its job and prevents constipation. Try caffeine-free herbal teas for variety. Sugar-sweetened beverages such as fizzy drinks or caffeinated beverages can make digestive issues worse for some people.

**10.**

## **EVERYBODY FARTS - IT'S A NORMAL BODILY FUNCTION**

We need to normalise gas. However, if digestive issues interfere with your quality of life, please seek medical advice.

**Why not try the 21 Day Plant-Based Challenge**