The Shocking TRUTH About Lectins (What RESEARCH Shows) Transcript

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Introduction to Lectins

In this video you're going to learn about the controversial plant compounds called lectins, the concerns they raise, how to safely prepare lectin-containing foods, and their surprising potential health benefits.

I'm Dr. Mark Stengler, and I've researched and written 20 books on nutrition and functional medicine.

What Lectins Are and Where Theyu2019re Found

Well, what are lectins? We're all encouraged to eat more plant foods, as plant-based diets have been shown to reduce the risk of several chronic diseases.

But recently, or in recent years, there's been some discussion about anti-nutrients, the so-called anti nutrients in plants. And one of the most controversial groups is lectin.

Now as defined in the journal Nutrients, lectins are carbohydrate-binding proteins found in both plants and animals. In plants, their job is to provide protection against invaders like insects, molds and fungi.

You'll find the highest concentration of lectin in raw legumes and whole grains, with smaller amounts in nuts, seeds, fruits and vegetables.

Potential Concerns About Lectins

So the question is, are lectines harmful? Well, there are a few theoretical concerns about eating plant lectins. Again, this is discussed in another journal called the Journal of Functional Foods.

First, lectin are highly resistant to being broken down by our digestive enzymes. This could potentially disrupt the intestinal lining, leading to increased gut permeability, also known as leaky gut, and I've had many videos on this topic if you don't watch them, an activation of the immune system.

It's important to note, however, that research showing this kind of harm has been done in animal models using high doses of isolated lectins. Lectins can cause the clumping of red blood cells and may also block nutrient absorption.

There is some concern about a potential link to autoimmunity and lectins. A study in the Journal of Immunology research looked at 500 healthy adults and found lectin-specific antibodies in up to 15% of blood samples.

which suggests that lectins can pass through the intestinal wall.

How Cooking Reduces Lectins

The study found a correlation between certain anti-lectin antibodies and rheumatoid factor. While this study suggests lectin may play a role in autoimmunity, more research is needed before we make any definite conclusions because it's so preliminary.

The good news is that lectins are denatured and deactivated through common cooking methods. This is what the research shows. There have been cases of food poisoning from eating raw or inadequately cooked legumes, like kidney beans, which is why proper preparation is so important.

Effective methods for deactivating lectin include soaking, fermentation, autoclaving, and boiling. Interestingly, as reported in the Journal of Foods, recommendations for cooking beans aren't uniform.

So for example, the World Health Organization recommends soaking beans for at least 12 hours, followed by 10 minutes of vigorous boiling. The FDA recommends, soaking for five hours followed, by 30 minutes cooking.

And Danish authorities, who are experts in this area, recommend 10 to 12 HOURS of soaking, Followed by, 30 to 60 minutes boiling So if you tend to have problems with legumes, then I would go with the higher cooking time, The soaking and the boiling, to deactivate, denature those lectins.

Possible Health Benefits of Lectins

But there are surprising benefits of lectins a lot of researchers won't tell you. While they protect plants, research report in the journal Functional Foods suggests that lectens may also have human health benefits.

This can include cancer protection due to an anti-tumor effect. Additionally, lectans from legumes have been shown to have antimicrobial activity against Candida albicans, bacteria and viruses.

However, there's more human research that is needed in this area. So while lectins are a valid concern in raw or undercooked foods, proper cooking methods effectively neutralize them.

And far from being just an anti-nutrient, they may even offer some unique health benefits. Well, I hope this video cleared up the controversy around lectin.

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Conclusion and Takeaways

Thanks for watching.