

# No need to fear lectin

In his book “The Plant Paradox,” Dr. Steven Gundry warns us to avoid eating foods that contain lectin (a type of protein), also called an anti-nutrient because it may impede the absorption of other nutrients.

However, while lectins may cause some damage if overeaten and/or improperly prepared, there is strong research supporting the benefits of eating plant foods. The healthiest people and cultures have consumed lectin-containing foods as part of their regular diet for centuries, without suffering any of the many health issues Gundry attributes to ‘lectins.’

Lectins are rich in many plants and lectin levels will vary significantly in each plant or plant family. In addition, there are many different kinds of lectins. Some seem to be beneficial in fighting diseases like cancer.

All plants contain “anti-nutrients” like lectins and other protective properties. It’s nature’s way of sparing the plant from the elements, insects, diseases, and being overeaten to extinction. These foods include broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, lettuce and other green leafy vegetables, rice, peas, tomatoes, nuts and seeds, green tea, and the list is endless. Moderation (eating small amounts) and properly preparing certain plant foods is what we need to practice – not omitting these foods. This is what Gundry et al should be teaching us.

It is also important to consider that much of the research done on lectins has been with animals or in-vitro (test tube). In addition, many of the studies have only looked at individual lectins and not the “whole” food that contains them. Therefore, we have no idea if other nutrients within a whole food may



somehow buffer or alter the effects of certain properties like lectins (or even gluten).

It is inaccurate to blame any health problem on a single isolated property in one food (like lectin or gluten). This is taking that one substance out of context from the whole food. It is misleading to focus on one “part” and omit the “whole.”

Before a lectin-free diet can be recommended for everyone, more research is needed. But so far, it looks as though this dietary advice is more a trend than a sensible or science-based practice.

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