

30 in 7 – Is this the secret to good gut health?



Leading nutritionist, [Lily Soutter](#), explains all you need to know about the true power of plant-based foods

Did you know that we have more bacteria in the gut than skin cells on the body? Collectively they are known as our gut microbiota, weighing around 2kg, which is the same weight as a large bag of potatoes! Our gut microbiota can influence many functions in the body, including digestion, immunity, body weight, vitamin production, and even mood. However low fibre diets, antibiotic use, stress and ageing can compromise the health of our gut microbiota.

So, is there anything we can do about it?

Well, fascinating research from The American Gut Project showed that individuals who consumed over 30 different types of plant-based foods per week had a more diverse mix of beneficial gut bacteria in comparison to those who ate less than 10. Therefore, a diverse diet can result in a more diverse microbiota which is suggested to be healthier, more robust and resilient to disease (1).

If you regularly find yourself reaching for the same old veggies, it may be time to switch things up. Aim for 30 different plants weekly to optimise the health of your gut. This may be easier than you think, plants can include any type of fruit, vegetable, grain, bean, pulse, nut and seed. If you need a headstart on diversifying your diet, here are 10 gut loving plants to try...



1. Lentils

Just 100g cooked lentils provides a huge 7.4g fibre, which really makes a dent in our 30g daily target! Fibre acts like a fertiliser for good gut bacteria, encouraging them to flourish and grow. However there's not just one type of fibre in plant-based foods, there are close to 100. Each fibre type feeds different strains of beneficial bacteria, which is why it's good to mix things up when it comes to plants.

Luckily there are a huge variety of lentils to enjoy. For example, brown lentils are perfect for stews, beluga lentils work amazingly in salads, red lentils make fab dahl, and puy lentils taste delicious in traybakes.

2. Berries

Berries are a great source of fibre, just 100g portion of fresh raspberries comes with 6.7g. Who would have thought that something so delicious could be so good for our gut! Berries are also a super-rich source of special phytochemicals called anthocyanins, a pigment that gives them their distinctive blue, purple and red hue. Anthocyanins are metabolised in the gut which in turn helps our healthy gut bacteria to flourish and grow (2).

Interestingly our gut bacteria feast on many different types of phytochemicals (polyphenols to be exact) which often provide the pigments to fruit and veg. This is why eating the rainbow can be so beneficial for our gut.

3. Mixed nuts

Why stick with just one nut when there's at least 20 to choose from? Nuts are a great source of fibre, protein, monounsaturated fat and vitamin E. A perfect nutrition combo to support heart and gut health. Better yet, each type of nut counts as one plant portion. To get you started, try a mix of walnuts, pecans, cashews, peanuts, almonds, macadamia and pistachio. The list is endless.

4. Edamame beans

Edamame beans are the whole immature soybeans and an excellent source of plant-based protein and fibre. In fact, their amino acid profile (building blocks of protein) is on par with animal protein. This means they're perfect for packing in a protein punch when enjoying plant-based meals such as

Goodlife's new Firecracker Vegetable Melt. They also make a yummy snack when topped with a pinch of salt, or even dried for a crunch.

5. Banana

Bananas are like nature's candy, deliciously sweet and full of goodness. But did you know that the slightly less ripe bananas have nutrition benefits too? Green bananas are an excellent source of resistant starch, a special type of fibre with prebiotic properties. Prebiotics are particularly effective at stimulating our healthy gut bacteria to grow.

6. Jackfruit

The new fruit on the block that everyone's talking about! Whilst fresh ripe jackfruit has a sweet tropical flavour, in the UK the young unripe green jackfruit is more commonly used in savoury meals. Due to its firm, stringy and fibrous nature, it works perfectly as a meat substitute for dishes such as pulled pork and even in burgers such as Goodlife's Loaded Burrito Veg Burger. Better yet, this fruit can really pack in a fibre boost with just a 100g portion providing a huge 6g.

7. Flaxseeds

Whilst each seed type counts towards our 30 plants, the amazing nutrition profile of flaxseeds are worth a mention. Flaxseeds, also known as linseeds are a source of magnesium, calcium, iron, potassium and zinc. Just 100g provides a mammoth 24g of gut-loving fibre. Plus flaxseeds are one of the few plant-based sources of omega 3. What's not to love!

These little seeds are also a source of lignans, in fact, they contain 800 times more than most other plants (3). Lignans are plant compounds that are converted by the gut microbiota into a form that is currently under research for potential benefits on menopausal symptoms and cardiovascular disease risk.

8. Turmeric

What better way to introduce new plants to your diet than via spices! Turmeric contains a component called curcumin which is thought to be responsible for its potential anti-inflammatory benefits. Did you know that by combining your turmeric with black pepper you can boost the bioavailability of curcumin by as much as 2000%? (4).

9. Herbs

Herbs are a perfect way to add flavour to your food whilst reducing the need for salt in our diet. What's more, each type of herbs contributes to our weekly 30 plant target. With so much variety we can never get bored. Why not try experimenting with dill, parsley, mint, coriander and more...

10. Tomatoes

The vibrant red hue of tomatoes is due to a plant pigment called lycopene. This phytochemical is a fat-soluble antioxidant and emerging research suggests it may play a positive role in heart health. As a general rule of thumb, the redder the tomato, the more lycopene it is likely to have.

Did you know that lycopene is much more bioavailable in processed tomatoes including canned tomatoes, tomato paste, tomato puree and even ketchup? What's more, combining tomato with healthy fats such as olive oil can increase the bioavailability even further!

Lily's top 3 Goodlife meal ideas to boost your gut health

1. **Goodlife's Vegetable Fibre Cracker Melt** with stir-fried ginger bok choy and quinoa served with kimchi
2. **Goodlife's Loaded Burrito Burger** in a whole grain bun with guacamole & fresh tomato salsa. Served with a slide of rainbow fries (carrot, beetroot and parsnip)
3. **Goodlife's Vegetable Paella Slice** served with roasted aubergine, mixed pepper, red onion and pine nut salad

Goodlife's brand new global-inspired range listed above is launching in January 2022 at Morrisons.



For delicious plant-based and veggie recipe inspiration, more helpful advice and to browse the full range of delicious veggie and vegan products available, visit www.goodlife.co.uk.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

All comments to be accredited to nutritionist Lily Soutter, on behalf of Goodlife

References:

1. <https://journals.asm.org/doi/10.1128/mSystems.00031-18>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29984532>
3. <https://healthyflax.org/health/ask-expert.php>
4. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9619120/>

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