

Beans and Flatulence: Unfounded Fear or Fact of Life?

By Andrea Hutchins, PhD, RD

Dry beans are a versatile, nutrient-packed powerhouse that consumers may not eat as frequently as recommended (up to 3 cups each week) due to the fear that they will experience excessive intestinal gas or flatulence. For a majority of consumers the fear of flatulence may be unfounded.

A recent study published in the Nutrition Journal (<http://www.nutritionj.com/content/10/1/128>) reported the results from three studies during which participants completed a weekly questionnaire to assess gastrointestinal discomfort issues such as increased flatulence, stool changes, and bloating. Healthy adults between the ages of 26 and 57 ate ½ cup of pinto beans, baked beans, black eye peas, or controls (canned green

beans, canned carrots, or chicken soups) every day for 8 to 12 weeks. Less than half of the participants reported increased flatulence during the first week of the study diets. By the second or third week of bean consumption 70% or more of the participants felt that any increase in flatulence had dissipated. Interestingly, 3–11% of the participants reported increased flatulence even when eating the control foods that did not contain any known flatulence-producing compounds.

For people that experience an initial increase in flatulence, eating smaller portions of beans at first, soaking and rinsing dry beans before cooking, and rinsing canned beans can help. After two to three weeks of consistent bean consumption, most people perceive that their flatulence rate returns to normal. 



About the Author

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