

Beans, Beans: Gas-reducing Tips

Consumption of nutrient-rich beans could decrease the risk for several chronic diseases; however, some people may be hesitant to increase beans in their diet due to the fear of intestinal gas and stomach discomfort, including increased flatulence. Certain nondigestible carbohydrates, termed oligosaccharides, are responsible. Some researchers have reported that flatulence associated with bean intake may be exaggerated, and individuals vary in their response to increased fiber intake [57]. Researchers suggest discarding the soaking and cooking water to remove some of these nondigestible carbohydrates [58].

Try these tips to reduce the occurrence of intestinal gas when eating beans:

- Increase beans in your diet slowly. For example, you may start by eating 2 to 4 tablespoons of beans per day, and gradually increase each day.
- Drink more water each day as you eat more beans (or other fiber-containing foods).
- Use the hot soak method when preparing dry beans. The longer beans soak, the more you will reduce the amounts of the gas-producing compounds.
- Change the water several times when soaking dry beans, and discard this water when soaking is completed. Many of the gas-causing carbohydrates are released into this soaking water.
- Rinse canned beans without sauce (such as kidney, navy, Great Northern) before eating or using in recipes.
- Consider using a gas-reducing enzyme tablet. These tablets are available over the counter in many pharmacies.

Flavor-boosting Tips

Beans tend to absorb the flavors of the ingredients with which they are cooked. However, take care to ensure that these added foods only increase flavor and do not hinder texture development. Follow these tips when adding each of these ingredients to beans to make them delicious and nutritious:

- **Acid:** Adding sources of acid is a great way to increase the depth of flavor in bean dishes. Add foods such as lemon juice, vinegar, tomatoes, chili sauce, ketchup, molasses or wine after beans have been cooked fully. These acidic foods can prevent beans from becoming tender and lengthen cooking time if they are added too soon.
- **Onions:** Adding onions also can increase the depth of flavor in beans. Add onions any time during the cooking process, but for a stronger onion flavor, add during the last 30 minutes of cooking.
- **Herbs and spices:** Add oregano, thyme, garlic, parsley or any other herbs/spices any time during cooking. However, keep in mind that flavors of herbs and spices tend to diminish the longer they are cooked.
- **Salt:** Add when the beans are almost tender because salt tends to toughen beans. Remember to use minimal amounts of salt to limit the sodium content of beans.

