

# Protein-Packed Plant Diets That Work

Most people think steak, chicken or fish when they think of protein-packed meals. That's not the entire truth. And unfortunately, this myth is fueled by a healthy meat industry that profits when you buy their propaganda. Turns out, a plant-based diet can pack the same punch as other sources. A complete protein is one that contains all nine essential amino acids that you need to consume through food: histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, threonine, tryptophan and valine.

**Try these 3 tricks for the ultimate protein-packed plant diet:**

1. **Eat a variety of whole foods.** Loading your diet with different vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, peas, beans, legumes and fruits optimizes the amount of the nine essential amino acids you're giving your body. The World Health Organization recommends that 5 percent of our daily calories (a little more if we training or working out) come from protein. On average, fruits have about 5 percent of their calories from protein. Vegetables, 20 to 50 percent. Sprouted seeds, beans and grains, 10 to 25 percent.
2. **Eat more raw foods.** Studies have shown that baking or grilling makes about half of the protein in the food unusable to the human body. Raw or living proteins are an even better source than cooked plant foods. We need 25 to 35 grams of protein a day. That means that if you eat 2,000 calories per day of raw plant foods containing average of 10 percent of their calories from protein, you would get 200 calories worth of protein, or 50 grams. This is more than adequate to support great health. Optimize your intake of raw foods by adding a fresh raw vegetable salad to every meal.

3. **Eat more superfoods: Plant-based sources of complete protein** are referred to as 'superfoods' and they're easily obtainable from supermarkets, health food stores and online. They include:

- Hemp seeds
- Quinoa
- Amaranth
- Buckwheat
- Bee pollen
- Goji berries
- Chia seeds
- Flax seeds
- Spirulina and chlorella
- Dulse (a sea vegetable)

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## 5 Reasons to Love Quinoa

Quinoa may be a super food, but most people don't find it super interesting. I disagree! It packs the same amount of protein per serving as milk, while giving you loads of nutrients, vitamins and minerals. It can easily stand alone in meals or be incorporated into a variety of healthy and flavorful recipes.

Not convinced to put this powerful grain into your meal rotation yet? Maybe these five reasons will change your mind:

1. **It super fuels your body with energy.** Cooked quinoa contains approximately 8 grams of protein per cup, according to the USDA. It's also one of the few vegetarian complete proteins, meaning it contains all 9 essential amino acids your body needs. Try it for breakfast or lunch to help you power through tough

afternoon workouts or long days at work.

2. **It stimulates healthy digestion.** One cup of quinoa contains a healthy serving of 5 grams of fiber, which improves digestion, lowers cholesterol levels, controls blood sugar and helps you maintain a healthy weight.
3. **It's a nutrient-dense food.** Quinoa is an amazing source of iron, magnesium, calcium, potassium, folate (a B vitamin) and more. In fact, a recent study showed that the grain contains the same concentrated amounts of two flavonoids, quercetin and kaempferol, as found in antioxidant-rich berries like cranberries and lionberries.
4. **It's naturally low in calories.** One cup of quinoa boasts just 222 calories. Because of its high levels of protein and fiber, this healthy carbohydrate doesn't convert quickly to sugar in your body. This means it doesn't spike your blood sugar levels and keeps you feeling fuller longer.
5. **It's a versatile grain.** Breakfast, lunch and dinner? Check, check and check! Quinoa can be prepared in delicious ways at all mealtimes. And research has shown that this superfood's nutrient profile isn't compromised by boiling, steaming or simmering. Toss it in salads, stir-fries, soup and porridge, or shape it into a veggie burger or a sushi roll.

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## 10 Tricks that Speed Weight

# Loss

When you're trying to drop pounds, these healthy tips may help you shed them faster. Try one or two! All you've got to lose is weight.

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## Probiotics? Prebiotics? What are the benefits and how do we pick one?

**Doron Kahana, M.D., CPNS**

There's been a lot of hype recently about the benefits of probiotics and prebiotics. And rightly so, these healthy bacteria keep our digestive system balanced, healthy and in optimal condition. When our digestive system works like it should, many symptoms and issues disappear. This month, I invited guest blogger, Doron Kahana, MD, CPNS to help me bring the best advice for Smart Life readers.

**Sure, they're both "Biotics", but what do "Pro" and "Pre" mean?**

Probiotics are live microorganisms that benefit your body. Usually either bacteria or yeast, they boost immunity, aid digestion and promote regularity. If it sounds strange to consume "good bacteria" to stay healthy, consider that more than 400 different types of happy bacteria already live in your GI tract. No joke.

Prebiotics are functional foods that can be used by healthy bacteria for nourishment. A fancy word for fiber, prebiotics promote a healthy microecology, or the composition of the intestinal microflora, in our body. Prebiotics are naturally found in onions, garlic, flaxseeds, whole-grain breads, beans and other high-fiber foods.

## **Probiotic benefits**

I recommend probiotics because they are preventive powerhouses that enhance digestion, strengthen the immune system, rev the metabolism, and ensure detoxification and elimination. Not bad, huh? Especially because the safety profile of probiotics is excellent, with minimal adverse effects reported even with very large doses.

## **The 3 most common issues**

Researchers believe we're only beginning to discover how valuable pre- and probiotics can be to our bodies. Whether or not you're prone to the conditions below, consider that many things – stress, anxiety, fatigue, junk food – can put a strain on our system. Here are just a few benefits:

1. It treats UTIs, vaginitis and yeast infections. These conditions arise when there's an imbalance in good and bad bacteria. Probiotics, when taken daily, regulate the balance so unhealthy situations don't spring up.
2. It reduces the severity and frequency of colds. Healthy bacteria bolster your immune system and keep sickness at bay.
3. It alleviates constipation, diarrhea and IBS. Studies have shown probiotics are a natural and effective way to reduce and/or eliminate the symptoms like pain, bloating, discomfort and irregular bowel movements.

## **How to pick a Probiotic**

Before buying, determine:

- **What type of bacteria it contains**, including the genus (first letter/word) and species (second word). Some types include: *L. acidophilus*, *L. bulgaricus*, *L. casei*, *L. gasseri*, *L. plantarum*, *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, *B. lactis*, *B. longum*, *Saccharomyces boulardii*. The more types of bacteria, the better, since different strains benefit your body in different ways.
- **How many bacteria per dose it contains**. You want at least 2 to 10 billion. If a brand doesn't list potency, that's a red flag not to buy. *S. boulardii* may sometime be listed in milligrams, choose 250 mg or more.
- **How pure is the dose**. Does it have additives or unhealthy bacteria? The cultivation and purification process varies considerably. Some higher grade products will request that you keep the probiotics refrigerated, others will be blister-packed to ensure freshness. Except for *S. boulardii*, which has a darker, sandy color, probiotics should look white (like sugar). Expect the scent and taste to be pleasant and not offensive.
- **What research or reviews say about the product**. ConsumerLab.com, for example, is an excellent resource for finding out which supplements are effective. Stay with reputable brands and shy away from discount offers. In this instance, there's a reason they're on sale. Good quality probiotics usually cost upward of \$1 a day.