Resistant Starch: A Different Kind of Fiber

Have you ever heard of resistant starch? Though starchy foods in general have a bad name, resistant starch actually has surprising health benefits.

What is Resistant Starch?

Resistant starch is a type of carbohydrate that resists digestion in the small intestine. The majority of carbohydrate absorption takes place in the small intestine. Resistant starch is digested along with other types of fiber in the large intestine, producing short-chain fatty acids, decreasing bowel pH, and decreasing bowel transit time. Resistant starch acts in similar ways as both insoluble and soluble fiber in that it’s fermented by bacteria naturally present in the large intestine. It even helps feed those healthy bacteria (1).

Where is Resistant Starch?

Resistant starch comes in several forms. Seeds, legumes, under-ripe bananas, and unprocessed whole grains naturally contain resistant starch, as do cooked and cooled potatoes, rice, and chilled pasta. Food companies can even make resistant starch by chemically modifying other food starches. Hi-maize is a commercial resistant starch produced from high amylase corn (1).

Why Eat Resistant Starches?

Research over the past 20 years identifies at least three potential health benefits of resistant starch:

Resistant starch decreases inflammation, promoting healthy gut bacteria that may help treat inflammatory bowel disease and reduce your risk of colorectal cancer (2).

It also improves glucose tolerance and insulin sensitivity, which could help improve blood sugar control for people at risk of (or diagnosed with) Type 2 diabetes (3).

Animal studies show reduced energy intake and improved weight loss with diets high in resistant starch (4).

By Lynn Grieger, RDN, CDE, CPT, CWC

References:


(c) Food and Health Communications, Inc www.foodandhealth.com