

# Zinc

## Why it's important

Our bodies use zinc for lots of different functions. These include fighting infection, growth and speeding up reactions. A vegan diet can provide all the zinc that you need.

## Recommended intakes

For adults in the UK, recommended daily zinc intakes are 7mg (milligrams) for women and 9.5mg for men<sup>1</sup>. These recommendations are based on the assumption that zinc losses are higher in men, taking into account losses via skin, hair, semen and menstruation.

## Sources of zinc

Sources of zinc include beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, walnuts, cashew nuts, chia seeds, ground linseed hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds and quinoa. These foods provide protein and iron too. The table below provides the zinc contents of some foods, including wholemeal bread:

Amount of food	Amount of zinc <sup>2,3</sup> (mg)
30g hulled hemp seeds	3.0
30g pumpkin seeds	2.0
30g cashew nuts	1.8
100g uncooked firm calcium-set tofu	1.6
150g cooked quinoa	1.6
30g chia seeds	1.4
30g ground linseed	1.3
2 slices medium wholemeal bread	1.2
30g walnuts	0.8
80g cooked red lentils	0.8
80g cooked kidney beans	0.6
80g reheated canned chickpeas	0.6

## Zinc absorption

Leavening bread increases zinc absorption<sup>4</sup>, and sprouting beans, chickpeas and lentils may help too<sup>5</sup>. Sprouts should be cooked thoroughly before being consumed by people in vulnerable groups, including those who are very young or pregnant<sup>6</sup>. You can find more information about safe sprouting on [the NHS Choices website](#).

## Summary

- Sources of zinc include beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, walnuts, cashew nuts, chia seeds, ground linseed, hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds, quinoa and wholemeal bread
- Ensure that your daily diet contains plenty of zinc-rich foods
- Leavening bread and sprouting beans, chickpeas and lentils may help to increase zinc absorption

## References

1. COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL ASPECTS OF FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY (1991) *Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom*, London: HMSO
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3. PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND (2015) *Composition of foods integrated dataset (CoFID)* available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/composition-of-foods-integrated-dataset-cofid> (viewed 26-SEP-2016)
4. NÄVERT, B, SANDSTRÖM, B AND CEDERBLAD, Å (1985) *Reduction of the phytate content of bran by leavening in bread and its effect on zinc absorption in man*, British Journal of Nutrition 53:47-53
5. SANDBERG, AS (2002) *Bioavailability of minerals in legumes*, British Journal of Nutrition 88(S3):281-285
6. NHS CHOICES (2016) *Sprouted seeds safety advice* available from: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/homehygiene/Pages/sprouted-seeds-advice.aspx> (viewed 03-FEB-2016)

