

Zinc

Why is zinc important?

Our bodies use zinc for lots of different functions. This nutrient is used for fighting infections, speeding up chemical reactions and helping our immune system function.

A zinc deficiency could lead to hair loss, more infections and poor wound healing.

How much zinc do you need?

In the UK, the recommended daily zinc intake for adults is 7 mg for women and 9.5 mg for men.¹ These recommendations assume that zinc losses are higher in men after considering losses via skin, hair, semen and menstruation.

How can you get enough zinc?

Zinc supplements are available, however it is possible to get all the zinc you need from eating a varied and balanced vegan diet. Vegan sources of zinc include beans, wholemeal bread and lentils.

The infographic on page two shows examples of vegan foods high in zinc. Most of these foods also provide [protein](#) and [iron](#) too^{2,3}.

Zinc absorption

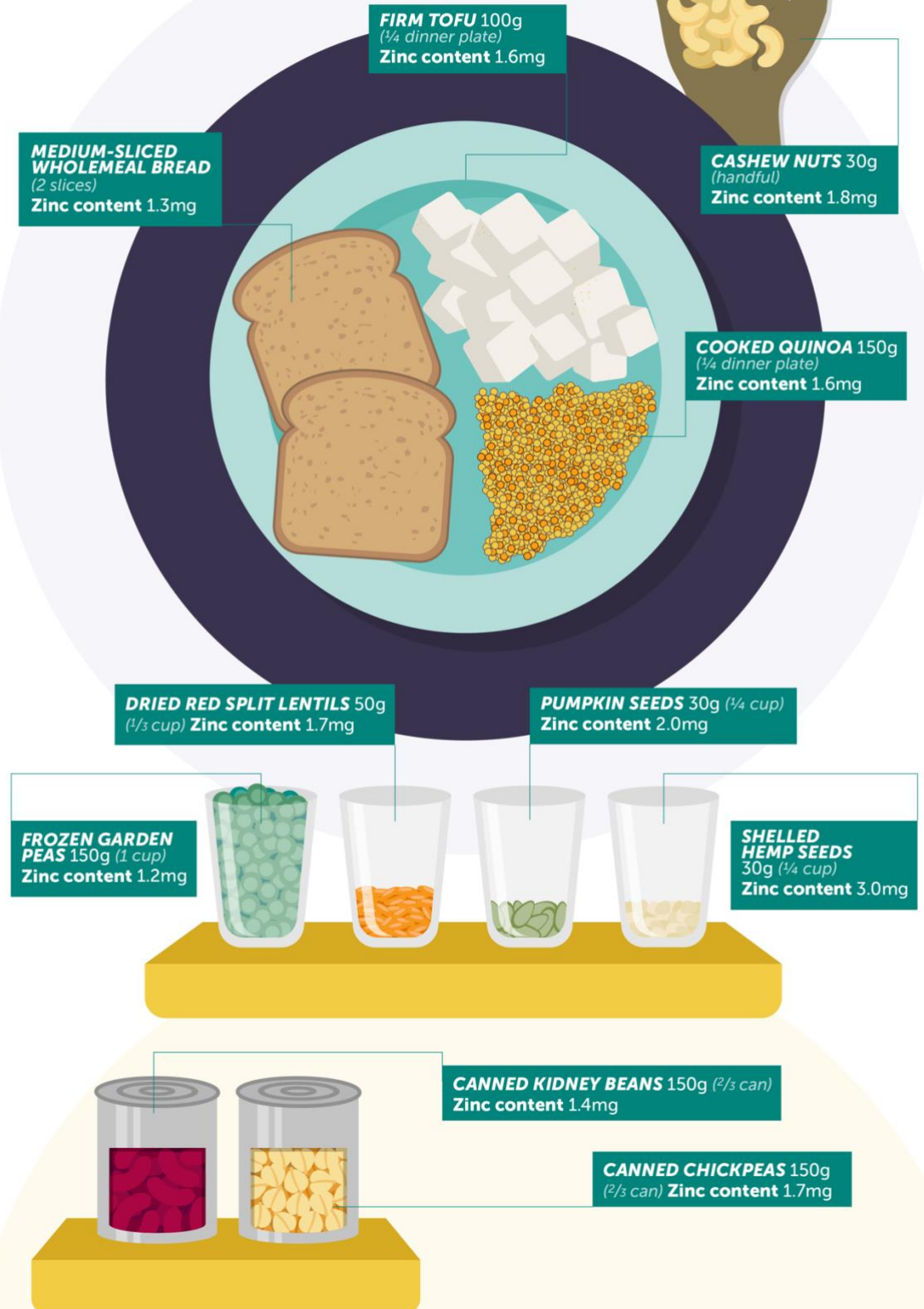
Wholemeal bread is a useful source of zinc because leavening increases the body's ability to absorb zinc.⁴ Sprouting beans, chickpeas and lentils may also help.⁵ Food Standards Agency advise to follow safe food hygiene practices when sprouting at home to avoid contaminated seeds that can lead to foodborne illnesses.

Zinc tip to take away

Ensure that you make zinc-rich choices throughout the day.

ZINC

MEAL PLANNING TIP: choose zinc-rich foods throughout the day



Further information

You might be interested to check out the following webpages at www.vegansociety.com:

- [Nutrition overview](#)
- [Life stages](#), including pregnancy, breastfeeding and different age groups

References

1. Committee on Medical Aspects of Food And Nutrition. *Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom* London: HMSO; 1991
2. Public Health England. *Composition of Foods Integrated Dataset (CoFID)* www.gov.uk/government/publications/composition-of-foods-integrated-dataset-cofid (accessed 05 October 2023)
3. United States Department of Agriculture. *FoodData Central* <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/> (accessed 05 October 2023)
4. Nävert B, Sandström B & Cederblad A. Reduction of the Phytate Content of Bran by Leavening in Bread and its Effect on Zinc Absorption in Man. *British Journal of Nutrition* 1985; 53: 47-53
5. SANDBERG, AS. Bioavailability of Minerals in Legumes. *British Journal of Nutrition* 2002; 88(S3): 281-285