







5 REASONS YOUR SALAD IS MAKING YOU BLOATED

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by WILLA TELLEKSON-FLASH, AUGUST 19, 2016



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Between **healthy fast-casual shops** 1/6 popping up on every corner and **Instagram-worthy mason jar salads** filling the office fridge, vegetables are staging a revolution. But if you're feeling a little bloated post-green feast, don't be so quick to look for **other causes**—the culprit may be in your bowl.

“You can turn a salad into a burger pretty quickly if you're not careful,” warns gastroenterologist Robynne Chutkan, MD, FASGE and founder of **Gutbliss**, whose expertise lies in finding solutions for all your GI concerns. Between oily dressings, excess fiber, and often-forgotten sources of salt, there are plenty of opportunities for a once-healthy salad to go south—for your gut, that is.

But fear not, you don't have to quit your Sweetgreen habit just yet. All it takes is a little intel and you'll be tossing together salads that'll make your tastebuds and GI tract equally happy in no time.

Here are five surprising causes of unwanted bloating to watch out for the next time you place your



salad order.

GET STARTED

2/6



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1. Your dressing isn't doing you any favors

Okay, so you already know that a salad swimming in dressing isn't the most beneficial way to get our veggie fix, but it turns out there's more to it than just quantity. "You have to look at the [condiment] in terms of the amount of oil, salt, and sugar, because those are all things that can bloat you," advises Chutkan, who specifically calls out restaurant dressings, which are often hyper-focused on taste (read: potentially packed with bloating triggers).

That doesn't mean you have to eat your salad dry though. (Thank green goddess!) "I love using just a little lemon juice because that can stimulate digestive enzymes and function as a 'de-bloater'," Chutkan says. And if you're looking for a bit more flavor complexity in your dressing, DIY-ing it is your best bet. These [simple salad dressing recipes](#) are an excellent place to start.



3/6



Photo: StockSnap/Sven Scheuermeier

2. Your salad is piled high with raw veggies

Uncooked vegetables are full of extra nutrients in their natural state. One of those essential nutrients? Fiber. And though your [gut loves the](#)

macronutrient, not everyone can tolerate large amounts at a time. “Even though fiber is great for you, too much in one sitting can kind of get stuck in your digestive tract,” says Chutkan.

One easy quick-fix: **Lightly steaming** or roasting some of your veggies before you toss them in your bowl, which breaks down some of the fibers so that they’re easier on your digestive system. Chutkan likes steamed broccoli or roasted asparagus, for starters, which pair nicely with a bed of greens. And if you’re looking for a salad base that has your back (er, gut), spinach is a great option. “It’s very soft and easy to digest,” explains Chutkan. “[Spinach] has a high water content so it can help to bulk the stool and de-bloat you.”



4/6



Photo: StockSnap/Krzysztof Puszczynski

3. Common toppings are sneaking in extra salt and sugar

Sprinkling nuts and dried fruits on top of your salad ups the taste factor, but it could also be the cause of your post-salad tummy troubles. That's because they often contain added sugar—a major bloating perpetrator. “The sugar can encourage the growth of the wrong kind of bacteria,” Chutkan explains, adding that said bacteria often leads to a higher production of gas.

While nuts are often a good source of healthy fats and protein, depending on how they're prepared they can be doused in oil or salt—neither of which is bloat-friendly. “Salt in particular can make you puffy and retain more water,” adds Chutkan.

The solution? Swap dried fruits for some fresh papaya, which contains a digestive-aiding enzyme called papain. And if you have a favorite nut or seed, look to buy them raw, unsalted, and—whenever possible—sprouted to get the nutrient benefits in their purest form.



5/6



Photo: Flickr/Personal Creations

4. Legumes are causing a fiber overload

Pulses are **all the rage**, and for good reason. They're nutritious sources of plant-based protein, full of micronutrients—iron, in particular—and pack a major fiber punch. But if your digestive system can't handle loads of raw veggies, legumes may be

tricky for you too. And though canned legumes make meal prep go by much faster, they're only worsening the situation. "Canned beans can be very bloating, because they often have higher quantities of raffinose," says Chutkan, explaining that raffinose is a sugar that our bodies struggles to break down.

But don't go tossing the chickpeas or black beans just yet. Chutkan offers a simple solution to keep tasty legumes on your plate: soaking and cooking them. "[Cooked beans] taste better, they're more nutritious, and they're often less gas-producing than the canned beans," dishes the gut expert. And yes, though it'd be so much easier to just use your can opener, soaking legumes at home predigests some of the raffinose, making them much more gut friendly.



6/6



Photo: StockSnap/Jeffrey Betts

5. Your salad is too big

Whoever first coined “moderation is key” was pretty spot on, including when it comes to your—gasp!—salad intake. “There *can* be too much of a good thing for your GI tract,” Chutkan explains. Not sure how full your bowl should be? “Somewhere between a side salad and an entree salad is probably the ideal size, depending on how you tolerate fiber,” she advises, recommending that if your salad is full of fibrous mix-ins, you may want to save some for later.

So what, then, does the gut expert like to put in salad for happy digestion? Besides a squeeze of lemon, Chutkan also loves hummus in place of dressing, adds a scoop of brown rice

for easily digestible fiber, and always focuses on getting a rainbow of (sometimes cooked!) veggies into her bowl.

Need some inspiration? Here are 14 wellness guru-approved salads to make. And if you follow these tips and you're still feeling bloated, you might want to consider trying the low-FODMAP diet.

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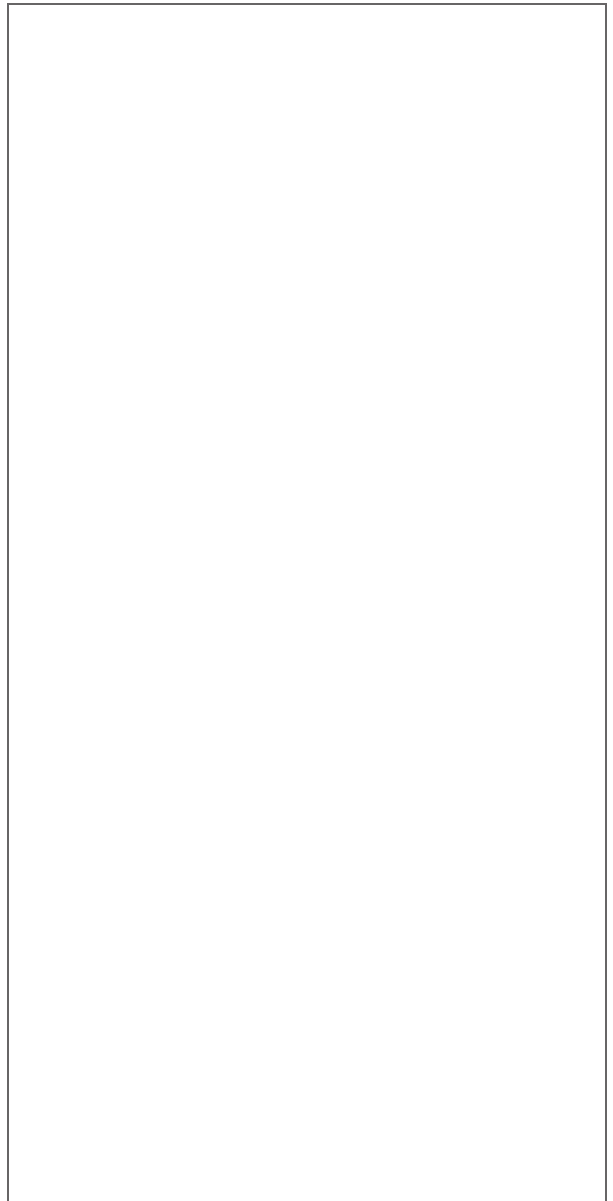



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