

SENIOR NUTRITION NEWS

August 2025

Beans: Tiny Foods, Huge Nutrition

Why Beans?

Beans are a great source of fiber, iron, and protein. Many seniors don't get enough of these nutrients. Without enough protein older adults can see a loss in muscle mass which can lead to more difficulty with activities of daily living and an increased risk of falls, which in time could eventually affect their ability to live independently.



Beans & MyPlate

Beans are the only food that fit into two food groups on USDA's MyPlate due to their nutrient profile. They are part of both the Vegetable Group and the Protein Group. You can choose to count beans as part of either food group, based on which food group you need more of.

The Cost of Beans

In addition to their nutrient-rich content, beans are also affordable. Many different bean varieties are available dried, canned, or frozen for your convenience. Not sure whether to buy canned or dried beans? You can decide based on convenience or cost. Choose dry beans if you want to save extra money. Canned beans are still an affordable option and can save you time. Look for no salt added canned beans.

Bean Varieties

- Black beans have a sweet flavor with a soft texture.
- Great Northern beans are a white-skinned bean with a mild, delicate flavor.
- Kidney beans are light or dark red, kidney-shaped, and maintain a firm texture when cooked.
- Navy beans are creamy white, small, mild-flavored beans.
- Pinto beans are beige-colored, and very popular beans in the Americas.



Think creatively about how you can include beans in your meals. Add beans to your favorite dishes. Experiment with different bean varieties to find your favorites.

Quick & Easy Bean Recipe Ideas

Black Bean Brownies: Strain 1 can no salt added black beans. Put them back in the can and fill the rest of the can with water. Pour in bowl, and mash beans as good as you can. When all mixed and mashed, add 1 box of brownie mix and stir well. Put in 9 x 13 greased pan, preheat oven to whatever the brownie mix says, and cook as long as brownie mix says.



Ten Minute Tacos: Soft tortilla, mashed canned pinto beans, shredded lettuce and low fat cheese, topped with taco sauce.

Chili is Cheap: 3 cans of beans (try any 3 no salt added kidney, garbanzo, pinto, black or navy beans), can of no salt added tomatoes, 2 tsp chili powder. Heat.

Quesadillas Quick: Flour tortilla, topped with fat-free refried beans, low fat cheese and another tortilla. Heat in skillet or microwave.

Easy Enchilada: No salt added canned pinto or black beans, shredded cheese and enchilada sauce on a corn tortilla. Roll-up add more sauce on top and heat.

Super Simple Bean Salad: Drain canned no salt added garbanzo beans, red kidney beans and green beans. Toss with low fat Italian dressing.

Red Beans and Rice: Cook rice and top with heated, canned red beans, with a dash of red pepper.

Sources: <https://extension.psu.edu/beans-the-magical-vegetable-and-protein> retrieved 07/31/25

For Information on Eat Smart Idaho classes, contact the Nutrition Instructor in your county:

Panhandle: Benewah, Bonner, Boundary,
Kootenai & Shoshone Counties 208-292-2525

North Central Idaho: Clearwater, Idaho, Latah,
Lewis, & Nez Perce Counties 208-883-2267



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