

Excellent source of fiber, protein, folate, iron, magnesium & calcium

# Legumes

The term legume (lehg-YOOM) refers to any of thousands of plant species that have seed pods that split along both sides when ripe. The most common legumes are beans, lentils, peanuts, peas, and soybeans. When the seeds of a legume are dried, they are referred to as pulses.

Legumes play an important role in the traditional diets in many regions of the world and are among the best nutrition bargains in the market – they cost less than 24 cents a serving and are an excellent source of fiber, protein, folate, iron, magnesium, calcium, potassium, and zinc. They are also naturally low in sodium and saturated fat. One serving of beans (1/2 cup cooked) provides 2-6 grams of a mix of soluble and insoluble fiber and nearly 90% of the recommended daily intake of folate.

Canned beans are a convenient way to get the benefits of legumes as most nutrients remain intact during the canning process. Canned beans are higher in sodium than fresh but draining and rinsing with water eliminates about 1/2 the salt. Rinsing also helps remove the oligosaccharides, which are the offending gas-producer in beans.

Legumes also contain phytonutrients such as flavonoids, tannins, anthocyanins and saponins. Even though phytonutrients are not considered essential nutrients, research over the past 15 years has demonstrated that some phytonutrients in legumes do provide health benefits.

Legumes are an integral part of a Mediterranean diet pattern which also includes a rich intake of vegetables, fruits, cereals, fish, and moderate intake of red wine with meals. A recent examination of 12 studies with over 1 1/2 million subjects over a period ranging from 3-18 years found that adherence to a Mediterranean diet was associated with reductions in cardiovascular mortality and cancer mortality as well as reductions in incidence of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.



Low in saturated fat

