

Legumes

Start a healthy habit

FACT SHEET

Enjoying legumes more often is a healthy habit and once you start you won't stop! Legumes are nutrient rich, containing dietary fibre, protein, carbohydrates (mostly low glycemic index) as well as phytonutrients, B group vitamins and minerals such as iron, zinc, calcium and magnesium.^{1,2}

Start this healthy habit today by aiming to enjoy a variety of beans, peas, lentils and chickpeas at least 2-3 times each week.

Know your legumes?



Legumes (also known as pulses) include all types of beans, peas, lentils and chickpeas and come in a variety of forms – dried, canned, cooked and frozen.

There are many different varieties of legumes including adzuki beans, baked beans, butter beans, cannellini beans, faba beans, kidney beans, mung beans, soy beans, black-eye peas, chickpeas, split peas, lentils and lupins. Soy foods like tofu and soy drink are also included as legume foods.

Legumes for longevity

Legumes are traditionally eaten in many cultures throughout the world; in particular legumes have been an important part of the diets of many long-lived food cultures such as the Japanese, who regularly eat soy foods such as tofu, natto and miso, and people from the Mediterranean where lentils, chickpeas and white beans feature.³

With this in mind it's no surprise that in 2004 researchers found that for every 20 grams of legumes eaten each day the risk of death was reduced by 8% in elderly people from Japan, Sweden, Greece and Australia. Interestingly, no other food group was so strongly linked to survival in older people.⁴



The health benefits await

Enjoying legumes more often has been linked with:

- Improved weight management⁵⁻⁸
- Improved cholesterol levels⁹
- Lower risk of heart disease¹⁰⁻¹³
- Improved blood glucose levels^{14,15}
- Reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes^{14,15}
- Reduced risk of some cancers¹⁶⁻²²

Did you know?

Most legumes have a low glycemic index (GI)! An easy way to lower the overall GI of your diet is by eating legumes more often with your meals or as a snack.²⁴

The Musical Fruit?

Have you heard that legumes (or beans) are the musical fruit? Well, research has indicated that less people experience increased gas after eating legumes than you may think, and importantly feelings of gas actually reduce to normal within a few weeks of eating legumes regularly.²³

If you're worried about gas try these tips:

- For dried legumes make sure you change the water once or twice while they soak, then rinse and use fresh water for cooking.
- For canned legumes drain and rinse thoroughly before adding to your meal or cooking.



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How much do I need?

Aiming to eat legumes 2-3 times a week is a great start. But, to reduce your risk of chronic disease eating different legumes four or more times a week is best.²⁵



Enjoy as a veggie and a 'meat alternative'

Legumes are recommended as part of the vegetables food group because they contain dietary fibre as well as a range of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients which include a range of protective compounds.^{26,27}

Compared with other plant foods legumes are higher in protein and contain important minerals such as iron and zinc. It's due to these unique features that the Dietary Guidelines encourage all Australians to include legumes regularly in place of meat and other sources of protein.²⁶

SERVE SIZE GUIDE

- ½ cup or 75g of cooked beans, peas, lentils or chickpeas counts as a serve of vegetables
- 1 cup or 150g of cooked legumes or 170g of tofu is a serve as a meat alternative
- 1 cup or 250ml of soy drink is a serve as an alternative to milk

Beans benefit the budget

Legumes provide a valuable and cost effective source of protein.²⁶ Enjoying legumes more often is a great way to help your meals go further.

Six tricks to starting this healthy habit

Tick these off as you try them and you will be well on your way to establishing this healthy habit.

Spice up your rice with some lentils!

Quick method:

1. Fry two finely chopped onions in 2 tablespoons of olive oil, until they are caramelised to a dark brown colour.
2. Rinse and drain 1 cup of dried red or green lentils, add to the onions with 4 cups of water and simmer for about 10 minutes.
3. Add the rice, cover and cook on a low heat, stirring regularly for a further 10 minutes, until water is absorbed.



Dried legumes like red or green lentils should be a staple of any pantry and preparing them is easier than you might think!

Mix it up and make a dip from legumes!

Use canned chickpeas, tahini, lemon and garlic to make hummus for use on bread instead of spread or as a snack with whole grain crackers.

Classic hummus dip recipe is available at www.glnc.org.au



Add legumes to your favourite dishes!



Dried or canned legumes can be easily incorporated into your favourite dishes, like spaghetti bolognese with red lentil or in soups, salads, casseroles and curries!

For cooking instructions and more recipe ideas visit www.glnc.org.au.

Boost your salads with some beans or chickpeas!

Toss a can of four bean mix (drained and rinsed) with chopped red onions and tomato, fresh basil, balsamic vinegar and olive oil for a simple summer salad.



Design an international dish!

Prepare an authentic Mexican burrito using 400g canned red kidney beans or ½ cup of dried kidney beans! Or have you ever tried Indian dahl?

Recipes available at www.glnc.org.au.



Try at least one of these ideas in the next week!

- Use baked beans (preferably salt reduced) in a meal
- Warm up with a canned soup (preferably salt reduced) containing legumes
- Give soy drink a go on your breakfast cereal
- Add tofu to a stir fry or salad

The possibilities are endless, for more great ideas on how to enjoy legume download *Legumes – Tips and tricks to enjoying them more often | An Everyday Guide to Cooking with Legumes*

Visit www.glnc.org.au to download recipes, fact sheets and subscribe to GLNC's e-newsletter to learn more about the benefits of grains and legumes. | For all references cited go to www.glnc.org.au/resources/fact-sheet-references.



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Contact Us – Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council™

P: 1300 472 467 (Australia only) P: +61 2 8877 7877 E: contactus@glnc.org.au W: www.glnc.org.au