

# **Surprising Beans: Underestimated Legumes with Hidden Health Benefits**

Beans, often overlooked and overshadowed by more popular legumes like lentils and chickpeas, are nutritional powerhouses packed with an array of health benefits. They are an excellent source of protein, fiber, and essential vitamins and minerals, making them a valuable addition to any balanced diet.


## **Unveiling the Nutritional Profile of Beans**

Beans are a true nutritional treasure trove. They are exceptionally rich in protein, with a single cup of cooked beans providing up to 15 grams. This makes them a great meatless alternative for vegetarians and vegans,


contributing to their satiety and overall well-being.

# PLANT PROTEIN: BEANS


(protein per ½ cup, cooked)




Edamame: 9.3 grams




Lentils: 9.0 grams



Black Beans: 8.0 grams



Chickpeas: 7.3 grams



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## Surprising Beans (Read-it! Readers: Science)

by Molly Blaisdell

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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In addition to protein, beans are an excellent source of fiber, both soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber helps regulate blood sugar levels and reduces cholesterol absorption, while insoluble fiber promotes regular bowel movements and supports digestive health.

Beans are also a good source of iron, which plays a crucial role in oxygen transport throughout the body. They contain significant amounts of folate, which is essential for cell growth and DNA synthesis. Additionally, beans are rich in potassium, magnesium, and zinc, all of which contribute to various bodily functions.

## **Health Benefits of Beans**

Consuming beans has been linked to a range of health benefits, including:

### **1. Heart Health**

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## Best Foods to Help Lower Cholesterol



Beans contain soluble fiber, which binds to cholesterol in the digestive tract and prevents its absorption into the bloodstream. This can help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Furthermore, beans are a good source of potassium and magnesium, which can help lower blood pressure. High blood pressure is a significant risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.

## 2. Blood Sugar Control

The soluble fiber in beans slows down the absorption of sugar into the bloodstream. This prevents spikes in blood sugar levels, making beans a beneficial choice for individuals with type 2 diabetes or those at risk of developing it.

## 3. Weight Management

# HIGH-FIBER FOODS

 <b>SPLIT PEAS</b> 1 cup cooked = 16g	 <b>LENTILS</b> 1 cup cooked = 15g
 <b>AVOCADO</b> 1 medium = 13g	 <b>ARTICHOKE</b> 1 cup = 22mg
 <b>PEAS</b> 1 cup cooked = 9g	 <b>BLACKBERRIES</b> 1 cup = 8.5g
 <b>RASPBERRIES</b> 1 cup = 8g	 <b>COCONUT</b> 1 cup = 7g
 <b>PEAR</b> 1 medium = 6.5g	 <b>BROCCOLI</b> 1 cup cooked = 5g
 <b>BRUSSELS SPROUTS</b> 1 cup cooked = 4g	 <b>OATS</b> 1 cup cooked = 4g

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Beans are a filling food due to their high fiber content. Fiber takes longer to digest, which keeps you feeling satisfied for longer. Additionally, the protein in beans contributes to satiety, reducing cravings and overeating.

#### 4. Digestive Health

The insoluble fiber in beans promotes regular bowel movements and prevents constipation. Adequate fiber intake is essential for maintaining a healthy digestive system and reducing the risk of digestive disorders.

#### Types of Beans and Their Culinary Versatility

There is a vast array of bean varieties, each with its unique flavor and nutritional profile. Some common types of beans include:

- **Black beans:** Known for their deep black color and slightly sweet flavor, black beans are commonly used in Mexican cuisine.
- **Kidney beans:** These red-colored beans have a vibrant flavor and are often used in chili and soups.
- **Pinto beans:** Pinto beans are speckled and have a mild flavor, making them a versatile choice for a variety of dishes.
- **Navy beans:** Small and white, navy beans are commonly used in baked beans and soups.
- **Cannellini beans:** Also known as white kidney beans, cannellini beans are large and creamy, with a nutty flavor.

Beans are incredibly versatile and can be incorporated into various culinary creations. They can be cooked and added to salads, soups, stews, and

casseroles. Mashed beans can be used to make dips and spreads, while whole beans can be used as a flavorful addition to tacos, burritos, and wraps.

## **Preparation and Storage of Beans**

Dried beans require soaking before cooking. This helps reduce cooking time, improves digestibility, and removes excess starch. To soak beans, rinse them thoroughly, cover them with water, and let them soak for at least 8 hours or overnight.

Once soaked, beans can be cooked in a variety of ways:

- **Stovetop:** Bring the soaked beans to a boil in a large pot, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 1-2 hours, or until tender.
- **Slow cooker:** Place the soaked beans in a slow cooker, add water or broth, and cook on low for 6-8 hours, or until tender.
- **Pressure cooker:** Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cooking beans in a pressure cooker.

Cooked beans can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 4 days or in the freezer for up to 6 months. Ensure to store them in an airtight container to preserve their freshness.

Beans are a nutritional powerhouse that offers a wide range of health benefits. Rich in protein, fiber, and essential vitamins and minerals, they promote heart health, blood sugar control, weight management, and digestive well-being. Incorporating beans into your diet is a simple and effective way to enhance your overall health and well-being."



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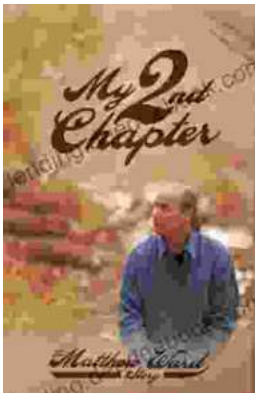
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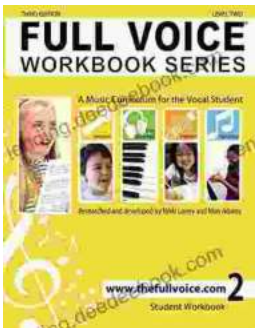
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