

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Beans, Beans, the Healthful Fruit

You surely remember the children's song about beans being a 'musical fruit'.

Now the evidence is growing that we could reword the verse to sing "Beans, beans, the healthful fruit, The more you eat, the longer you'll toot."

Some of the most recent studies compared eating beans and living longer after colon polyps or cancer. So far the study has followed people with colon polyps or cancer for 4 years. Half the participants were encouraged to eat a high fiber, low fat diet and to increase the amount of fruits, vegetables and beans.

Four years after their diagnosis, the people who ate the most beans had 65% fewer recurrences of cancer. In other words, the people who ate the most beans were much more likely to live longer. The beans that most people were eating more of were dry beans such as lentils or pinto and navy beans.

Colon cancer is not the only ailment that beans reduce. There have been lots of studies that found that people who eat more beans and less meat usually have much lower risk of heart disease as well. And beans may help manage diabetes too.

What's so special about beans? Well, all that fiber for one thing. Half a cup of canned, drained chickpeas (garbanzo beans) has 5.3 g of fiber, or almost one quarter of what is recommended. Half a cup of canned pinto beans has 5.5 g, and the same amount of white beans gives us 6.3 g of fiber. Beans have insoluble fiber, the kind that helps with constipation. They also have the soluble fibers that helps reduce cholesterol levels, especially the LDL or 'bad' kind. And bean fiber seems to help our bodies

manage our blood sugar better. One study found that people who ate bean fiber for just 6 weeks had lower blood sugar levels and needed less insulin to keep their sugar low.

In addition, beans have a good quality protein and very little fat. They are very good sources of vitamin B-6 and folate. And they provide some of the less common minerals we need, such as copper, manganese and molybdenum. Don't worry about pronouncing that last one, just eat your beans to get it. These minerals are necessary for our bodies to process our food into energy.

If you are one of the people who 'toot' a lot when you eat beans, there are a few tricks that might help you enjoy this healthy food. When you soak dry beans before cooking them, change the water a couple of times. Then partly cook them in plain water. Drain them, and start them again in fresh water with the seasonings, tomato sauce or whatever else you want to add. If you prefer to buy canned beans drain and rinse them in a colander before you add the seasonings.

These methods help because what causes the gas are a couple of unusual sugars. By changing the water while the beans soak you can get rid of some of them before they get into your intestines where they cause problems. Rinsing canned beans also removes a lot of salt. Taking Beano® tablets or drops before your meal allows the Beano to break the sugars apart before they get into your intestines. Either way, you still get the fiber, vitamins and minerals.

If you buy dry beans, try to get them at a store that sells a lot of beans. If dry beans sit on a shelf for months and months they might get so old that they won't soften no matter how long you cook them.

Here's a recipe for an unusual version of a BLT. This is Beans, Bacon, Linguine

and Tomato Salad. Linguine is a type of spaghetti, but if you want to make it with macaroni or bow tie pasta to keep the children happy, go right ahead. Try to use a low fat salad dressing to keep it healthy.

BLT Salad

2 oz linguini (or any pasta, enough for 8 servings)	½ C diced celery
1 - 15 oz can navy beans, drained and rinsed	¼ tsp lemon pepper
1 ripe tomato, diced	½ C creamy ranch dressing
¼ C imitation bacon bits (or real ones)	¼ C sliced black olives

Cook pasta according to directions on the package. Rinse with cold water and drain well. In medium bowl gently mix pasta, beans and rest of ingredients. Cover and chill for several hours to allow flavors to blend. To serve add a little more dressing to moisten if necessary. Divide onto 8 plates and garnish each with a cherry tomato, a black olive or a sprinkle of extra bacon bits. Serves 8.

(Recipe courtesy of the Northarvest Bean Growers Association)

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