

From the Nutritionist

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Beans are a Superfood

Although they haven't reached the popularity of kale, quinoa, or avocados, many nutrition and health professionals consider beans a superfood – and with good reason! While no single food provides everything a person needs, beans do have more nutrients than many other foods. And, they're cheap! If you don't already eat beans on a regular basis, here are some reasons why you should:

- **PROTEIN:** Most bean varieties have at least 8 grams per half cup, as much as an ounce of meat
- **CARBS:** Beans contain complex carbohydrates, which give you steady, long-lasting energy
- **FIBER:** Half a cup of beans gives you 7 grams of fiber, which helps decrease the risk of high cholesterol and blood pressure, and keeps the digestive tract running smoothly
- **VITAMINS AND MINERALS:** Beans contain a host of these nutrients which are needed for overall good health

So now that you know *why* you should eat beans, what's the best way to do it? Actually, the sky's the limit! There are so many ways to eat them, and so many different kinds of beans, you could try something new every week and not get bored. Here are just a few of the many varieties: black beans, pinto beans, garbanzo beans (AKA chickpeas), navy beans, kidney beans, soy beans, edamame (which is an immature soy bean), and lima beans. They all have different flavors and some are better suited to certain recipes. But, if you find a favorite, try it in any bean-based recipe and see if it works. Here are a few popular ways to eat beans:

- Pair hummus or bean dip with veggie sticks or whole grain crackers
- Give kidney beans a starring role in vegetarian or meaty chili
- Swap a hamburger for a black bean burger, with all your favorite toppings
- Have some beans on your salad to make it more satisfying
- Choose baked beans as a side dish
- Add some beans to soup for flavor and heartiness
- Ask for refried beans in your next Mexican-style meal
- Toss edamame in your stir-fry for a boost of nutrition