



The Humble Bean: Your Ticket to a Longer Life

Let's talk about beans. Yes, beans. Not the latest pharmaceutical breakthrough. Not a high-tech wearable. Not a supplement that costs \$80 a bottle. Just beans — the affordable, unglamorous legume sitting in a can in your pantry right now. *It turns out they might be the single most life-prolonging food a human being can eat. And we have the data behind it.*

The Science Is (Surprisingly) Not Full of Hot Air

A landmark study published in the Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition (PMID 15228991) followed over 785 elderly adults across four countries — Japan, Sweden, Greece, and Australia — for up to seven years. Researchers looked at every major food group to see which one best predicted who would still be alive. Vegetables? Nope. Fish? Close, but no cigar. Fruits? Not consistently. The winner, across every culture and ethnicity studied, was legumes — the food group that includes beans, lentils, chickpeas, and peas. Every additional 20 grams per day (less than a handful) was associated with a 7–8% reduction in the risk of dying. No other food group came close. A 2022 modeling study in PLOS Medicine (PMID 35134067) took things further by estimating the actual years of life gained from dietary changes. The researchers found that increasing legume consumption was among the most impactful single dietary changes a person could make — potentially adding years to one's life expectancy, particularly when started before middle age. To be clear: not weeks, not months — years. For a food that costs about \$1 per can, that is an extraordinary return on investment.

Why Do Legumes Work So Well?

Legumes are essentially a nutritional Swiss Army knife. They are high in fiber, plant-based protein, B vitamins, iron, magnesium, and polyphenols — natural antioxidants that help fight inflammation. A major systematic review (Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition, PMID 31983216) demonstrated that regular pulse (which is the word for dried beans) consumption improves blood sugar control, lowers LDL (aka bad) cholesterol, reduces blood pressure, and helps maintain a healthy weight. In other words, they attack nearly every major cardiovascular risk factor simultaneously. Your gut bacteria are also big fans. The resistant starch in legumes feeds beneficial bacterial populations like Bifidobacterium and Faecalibacterium prausnitzii — strains strongly associated with reduced inflammation and better metabolic health.

The Elephant in the Room

We all know the ancient wisdom: Beans beans they're good for your heart. The more you eat, the more you...

Alright, we have to address it. The gas. Yes, beans cause flatulence. This is because they feed your beneficial gut bacteria (which do their work loudly). The good news: your body adapts. Studies show that people who eat legumes regularly experience significantly less gas over time as their gut microbiome adjusts (*Nutrition Journal*, PMID: 22104320). You can also speed this process along by rinsing canned beans thoroughly, starting with smaller portions, or trying lentils and split peas, which tend to be gentler.

The Bottom Line

Beans, lentils, chickpeas, black-eyed peas, edamame – aim for at least half a cup per day. Toss them in a salad, blend them into a soup, or eat them straight from the can if you're feeling efficient. They are cheap, filling, and according to multiple lines of high-quality evidence, among the best things you can do for your longevity. Your cardiologist will be pleased. Your gut (and family and friends) will eventually forgive you.

References

Darmadi-Blackberry et al. *Asia Pacific J Clin Nutr*. 2004;13(2):217-220. PMID: 15228991
Fadnes LT et al. *PLoS Med*. 2022 Feb 8;19(2):e1003889. PMID: 35134067
Ferreira H et al. *Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr*. 2021;61(18):3066-3077. PMID: 31983216
ADD Nutrition Journal, PMID 22104320

Healthy Habits:

Mediterranean White Bean Salad

Ingredients

- 2 cans (15-oz each) Cannellini beans or chickpeas (drained and rinsed)
- 1 cup Cucumber, diced
- 1 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/3 cup Red onion, finely diced
- 1/2 cup Kalamata olives, sliced
- 1/4 cup Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large Lemon, juiced
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Dried oregano
- To taste Sea salt and cracked black pepper
- 1/2 cup Fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp Fresh mint, chopped
- 1 Avocado, diced
- 1/3 cup Sunflower seeds (raw or dry-roasted)

Directions

This salad tastes better the longer it sits, making it an incredible make-ahead side for a summer gathering or a great lunch option for the week!

1. Rinse and Dry the Beans: Drain and thoroughly rinse two 15-oz cans of cannellini beans or chickpeas. Shake off as much excess water as possible so the dressing doesn't get diluted.
2. Build the Dressing Base: Whisk directly in the serving bowl, 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, the juice of 1 large lemon, 1 minced garlic clove, 1 tsp dried oregano, and a pinch of sea salt and cracked black pepper.
3. Marinate the Dense Ingredients: Add the dried beans, 1 cup diced cucumber, 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes, 1/3 cup finely diced red onion, and 1/2 cup sliced Kalamata olives directly into the dressing. Toss well and let it sit at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes, so the flavors penetrate the beans.
4. Fold and Chill: Just before serving, gently fold in 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley, 2 tbsp chopped fresh mint, 1 diced avocado and 1/3 cup of raw or dry-roasted sunflower seeds over the top. Toss gently one final time so they disperse evenly without losing their crispness.



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