



The Wonderful, Marvelous Bean

The author Edwin Sidney Hartland knew a good thing when he transformed the character of Jack with the help of some magic beans. Beans are too often overlooked considering their health benefits and all the nutrients packed inside such a tiny shell.

Did You Know? Beans are actually part of the legume family which includes not only beans but peas, lentils, and soybeans.

AND: Under proper storage conditions, beans can be stored for up to one year.

All of the legumes have the nutritious components listed below:

Protein: Legumes are an excellent substitute for meat in meals as they are a good source of protein. Because animal sources of protein have the highest amount of saturated fat and cholesterol substituting legumes for a meal can provide us with the protein our bodies need without the added fat and cholesterol. Legumes are naturally low in fat and contain no cholesterol.

Phytochemicals: Legumes provide phytochemicals to help aid in the prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer. Phytochemicals are plant chemicals that have a protective or disease preventive properties not only for the plant but also for humans who eat these plants.

Fiber: Legumes provide us with fiber which aids in keeping our GI tract healthy and in keeping us from getting constipated. Fiber, the part of the plant that our bodies can't digest, reduces the risk of developing diabetes and helps in lowering blood cholesterol levels. The bean is the second-best source of dietary fiber of all foods we consume.



Vitamins and Minerals: Legumes contain folate, potassium, magnesium, and iron. Folate is an important vitamin as it helps to prevent birth defects, makes normal red blood cells, and helps in the production and maintenance of new cells. Potassium is another vitamin needed to assist in muscle contraction and to maintain fluid and electrolyte balance in cells. Magnesium is a vitamin needed for more than 300 biochemical reactions in the body. It helps to promote normal blood pressure, maintain muscle and nerve function, to keep your heart rhythm steady, support a healthy immune system, and keep bones strong. Iron is a mineral that is an important part of many proteins and enzymes. It helps to regulate cell growth and differentiation and in oxygen transport.

Information obtained from the National Institute of Health at www.ods.od.nih.gov

