

# The Be Fit Minute

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## SPILLING THE BEANS ON BEANS

### Why You Should Eat Them

Beans are high in *soluble fiber*, which may help lower cholesterol and improve blood sugar control. Research has shown that diets high in fiber can reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer. Beans are also a great plant-based protein.

### How To Include Them

Beans have varying flavors – so experiment! Here are some ideas to get you started:

**Put Them in Pasta.** Add 1 can of white beans to marinara sauce or pesto pasta.

**Add Them to Salads.** Top salads with different beans for inspired flavors - chickpeas for a Mediterranean flare, black beans for taco salad vibes or edamame in a chopped Thai salad.

**Spread on Sandwiches.** Hummus, a blend of chickpeas and spices, is a tasty plant-based alternative to mayo or cheese.

**Snack on Them.** Roasted chickpeas can satisfy a craving for crunch. Roast a can of chickpeas with 1 tablespoon olive oil at 400° for 30-35 minutes (or until dry and crunchy), shaking the pan every 10 minutes. Then toss with your favorite spices.

### Should I Worry About Lectins?

Lectins are carbohydrate-binding proteins found in beans (and many other plants). They have been criticized for being “toxic” and a trigger for inflammation. It is true that raw beans, especially kidney beans, can contain high levels of lectin.

However, cooking inhibits these negative side effects. Soaking beans (for at least 5 hours) also reduces lectin content, as does cooking them in boiling water until tender. Canned beans are pre-cooked and can be eaten right away.

There is no conclusive research that suggests beans should be avoided due to their lectin content. In fact, quite the opposite is true.

Research has shown their consumption is associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and prostate cancer. They have also been shown to reduce LDL (“bad”) cholesterol.

**In summary: eat your beans, just make sure they are cooked first.**

Photo credit: NYT's Cooking (pasta) and Jessica Gavin (chickpeas)

