

Healthy Foods

Health Benefits: Black Beans



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Black beans, also known as turtle beans because of their hard shell-like appearance, are classified as legumes. The beans are actually the edible seeds of the legume plant. Like other legumes such as peanuts, peas and lentils, black beans are prized for their high protein and fiber content. They also contain several other key vitamins and minerals that are known to benefit human health.

Health Benefits

Maintaining healthy bones:

The iron, phosphorous, calcium, magnesium, manganese, copper and zinc in black beans all contribute to building and maintaining bone structure and strength. Calcium and phosphorus are important in bone structure, while iron and zinc play crucial roles in maintaining the strength and elasticity of bones and joints. 99% of the body's calcium supply and 80% of its phosphorus stores are contained in bone, which makes it extremely important to get sufficient amounts of these nutrients from the diet.

Lowering blood pressure:

Maintaining a low sodium intake is essential to lowering blood pressure. Black beans are naturally low in sodium and contain potassium, calcium, and magnesium, all of which have been found to decrease blood pressure naturally. Be sure to drain and rinse canned black beans to reduce sodium content.

Managing diabetes:

Studies have shown that type 1 diabetics who consume high-fiber diets have lower blood glucose levels and type 2 diabetics may have improved blood sugar, lipids and insulin levels. One cup (172g) of cooked black beans

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contributes 15 grams of fiber. *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends 21-25 grams of fiber per day for women and 30-38 grams per day for men.

Warding off heart disease:

The black bean's fiber, potassium, folate, vitamin B6 and phytonutrient content, coupled with its lack of cholesterol, all support heart health. The fiber in black beans helps lower the total amount of cholesterol in the blood and decrease the risk of heart disease. Vitamin B6 and folate prevent the buildup of a compound known as homocysteine. When excessive amounts of homocysteine accumulate in the body, it can damage blood vessels and lead to heart problems. The quercetin and saponins found in black beans also aid in cardio protection. Quercetin is a natural anti-inflammatory that appears to reduce the risk of atherosclerosis and protect against the damage caused by low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol.³ Research also indicates that saponins help lower blood lipid and blood cholesterol levels, which prevents damage to the heart and blood vessels.

Preventing cancer:

Selenium is a mineral that is not present in most fruits and vegetables but can be found in black beans. It plays a role in liver enzyme function, and helps detoxify some cancer-causing compounds in the body. Additionally, selenium prevents inflammation and also decreases tumor growth rates. Saponins prevent cancer cells from multiplying and spreading throughout the body. Fiber intakes from fruits and vegetables like black beans are associated with a lowered risk of colorectal cancer. Black beans are high in folate, which plays a role in DNA synthesis and repair, thus preventing the formation of cancer cells from mutations in the DNA.

Healthy digestion:

Because of their fiber content, black beans help to prevent constipation and promote regularity for a healthy digestive tract.

Weight loss and satiety:

Dietary fiber is commonly recognized as an important factor in weight loss and weight management by functioning as a "bulking agent" in the digestive system. High fiber foods increase satiety and reduce appetite, making you feel fuller for longer and thereby lowering your overall calorie intake. Consuming fruits and vegetables of all kinds has long been associated with a reduced risk of many lifestyle-related health conditions. Many studies have suggested that increasing consumption of plant foods like black beans decreases the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and overall mortality while promoting a healthy complexion and hair, increased energy and overall lower weight.