

PULSES (BEANS, LENTILS AND PEAS)

Most of us are familiar with the humble baked bean and green peas but there are many other beans, lentils and peas to choose from. See the list below:

- aduki beans
- black-eyed beans
- black turtle beans
- borlotti beans
- broad beans
- butter beans
- cannellini bean
- chickpeas
- black peas
- flageolet beans
- kidney beans
- lentils – green, red split, puy, brown
- pinto beans



So, why eat more pulses?

1. They have a low glycaemic index (GI)

Pulses do not give sharp rises to blood glucose levels compared to other carbohydrate-containing foods. The carbohydrate breaks down slowly into glucose and the protein and fibre content in pulses slows the movement of this glucose into the blood. Therefore, people with diabetes often find eating pulses doesn't cause big spikes in their glucose levels, especially if the portions are not too big. For this reason, it is suggested that normal portions of pulses do not need to be carb counted but check BG if you are eating larger quantities, you may have to count for half the carbs in the portion.

2. They count towards your five a day

Three tablespoons of pulses (about 80g) count as one serving of vegetables.

3. They are a source of protein

Pulses are a good source of protein, essential for building and replacing muscle. They are a source of protein for people who follow a vegetarian or vegan diet.

4. They are a good source of fibre

Pulses are an excellent source of fibre, essential to keep your digestive system healthy. There are two types of fibre – soluble and insoluble. Pulses are a good source of soluble fibre, which may help to lower your cholesterol levels, protect your heart, reducing your risk of heart disease. Research also shows that people who have a good fibre intake have lower rates of conditions such as bowel cancer.

5. They are filling

The fibre and protein in pulses makes them a very filling food, which is good news if you are watching your weight or trying to snack less in between meals.

6. They are low in fat

All pulses are low in fat, which is great news for your heart and your weight. Fat can, however, be added in cooking, olive oil and rapeseed oils are healthy oils to use in cooking.

7. They are cheap

If the health benefits are not enough to tempt you to pop a few pulses in your basket, then maybe knowing they are so cheap will! Most tins and packets of pulses are less than a pound. To make your money go even further, as they are such a good source of protein, you can use them to replace some – or all – of the meat in a recipe. In doing so, you save money, cut the fat and calorie content and bump up the fibre intake and make your meal go further.

Buying and cooking pulses?

- The most convenient way to introduce more pulses into your diet is to buy cooked packet and tinned pulses as they need no preparation and are ready to add to your cooking. You can use them on their own with added flavourings such as spices, herbs, fried onions, garlic, lemon juice, soy sauce. Or you can make meals with them such as chilli, curry, salads, cottage pie, pies, burgers. You can add to meat dishes to make to meat go further or to add a different flavour/texture such as shepherd's pie, lasagne, to chicken thighs, spicy rice or mince. With added flavours they make a nice accompaniment to meals such as baked fish or any meat or chicken dish.
- Beans and some dried peas need a little more preparation; they need to be soaked in cold water before cooking. Lentils and split peas do not need to be soaked before cooking.
- Cooking times vary depending on the type of pulses and how old they are, so follow the instructions on the packet or recipe or search on the internet for more information.
- Dried kidney and soya beans contain toxins, so it's important to make sure that they have been cooked properly, to destroy the toxin, before you eat them. If you are not confident cooking dried kidney/soya beans, just buy tinned versions which have already been prepared for you.
- Cool leftover pulses as quickly as possible and put in the fridge or freezer. As with all cooked foods, don't leave cooked pulses at room temperature for more than an hour. If stored in the fridge, eat within two days. Pulses can be frozen. Defrost and eat within 3 months.

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/enjoy-food/eating-with-diabetes/food-groups/pulses-and-diabetes>

Recipes to try: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/pulse>

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