

BEANS IN MyPYRAMID

Beans hold an important place in MyPyramid, the USDA's recommended eating plan for Americans. Because of their nutrient content, beans and peas are the only foods that appear in two different food groups in the pyramid. In fact, beans are recommended by MyPyramid for everyone, vegetarians and meat-eaters alike. Below are answers to common questions about how beans fit into MyPyramid.

Why are beans listed in both the Meat and Beans Group and the Vegetable Group?

Beans fit into two groups because they have a nutrient profile similar to other foods in both the Meat and Beans Group and the Vegetable Group. Because they are a good source of protein, beans are listed in the Meat and Beans Group. Even better, unlike some other foods in this group, beans provide a low-fat, saturated fat-free, and cholesterol-free source of protein. And, because beans are a plant-based food that provide fiber, folate, potassium and antioxidants, they also are listed in the Vegetable Group.

When do beans count as Meat and Beans and when do they count as Vegetables?

Beans are generally counted in either the Meat and Beans Group or the Vegetable Group – but not both. People who seldom or never eat meat, poultry and fish would typically put beans in the Meat and Beans Group. People who consume the recommended amounts of meat, poultry and fish would put beans in the Vegetable Group.

What are the serving sizes and ounce equivalents for beans?

If beans are counted in the Meat and Beans Group, consider 1/4 cup cooked beans as a one-ounce equivalent of meat. If beans are counted in the Vegetable Group, consider 1/2 cup cooked beans as the equivalent of 1/2 cup of vegetables.

How many servings of beans should I eat in a week?

For a 2,000 calorie daily diet, USDA recommends that people consume three cups of beans each week. That is about three times what the average American consumes today. (See mypyramid.gov for recommended bean intake at other calorie levels.) There are lots of easy ways to add beans to the diet: on top of salads, mixed into soups, in Mexican dishes, or as a side dish instead of rice or potatoes.

Why are beans sometimes referred to as dry beans?

“Dry beans” is the technical term for bean seeds that are allowed to dry in their pods until they are fully matured. The term “dry” does not refer to how the beans are packaged. For example, both canned pinto beans and pinto beans sold in a bag are considered dry beans. Common types of dry beans include pinto beans, navy beans, black beans and kidney beans. Green beans are not considered dry beans because they are harvested before maturity and thus have a different nutritional profile than dry beans. Green beans are part of the Vegetable Group but not part of the Meat and Beans Group.

Pinto beans are by far the most popular dry bean in America. Below is a list of common bean types and the percentage of total U.S. dry bean consumption they represent.

- **Pinto Beans: 46%**
- **Navy Beans: 12%**
- **Black Beans: 8%**
- **Kidney Beans: 8%**
- **Great Northern Beans: 6%**
- **Garbanzo Beans: 3%**
- **Small Red Beans: 2%**
- **Other Beans: 15%**

Source: Economic Research Service, USDA, 2002-2004 data





MyPyramid.gov

STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

GRAINS Make half your grains whole	VEGETABLES Vary your veggies	FRUITS Focus on fruits	MILK Get your calcium-rich foods	MEAT & BEANS Go lean with protein
<p>Eat at least 3 oz. of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta every day</p> <p>1 oz. is about 1 slice of bread, about 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked rice, cereal, or pasta</p>	<p>Eat more dark-green veggies like broccoli, spinach, and other dark leafy greens</p> <p>Eat more orange vegetables like carrots and sweet potatoes</p> <p>Eat more dry beans and peas like pinto beans, kidney beans, and lentils</p>	<p>Eat a variety of fruit</p> <p>Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit</p> <p>Go easy on fruit juices</p>	<p>Go low-fat or fat-free when you choose milk, yogurt, and other milk products</p> <p>If you don't or can't consume milk, choose lactose-free products or other calcium sources such as fortified foods and beverages</p>	<p>Choose low-fat or lean meats and poultry</p> <p>Bake it, broil it, or grill it</p> <p>Vary your protein routine – choose more fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds</p>