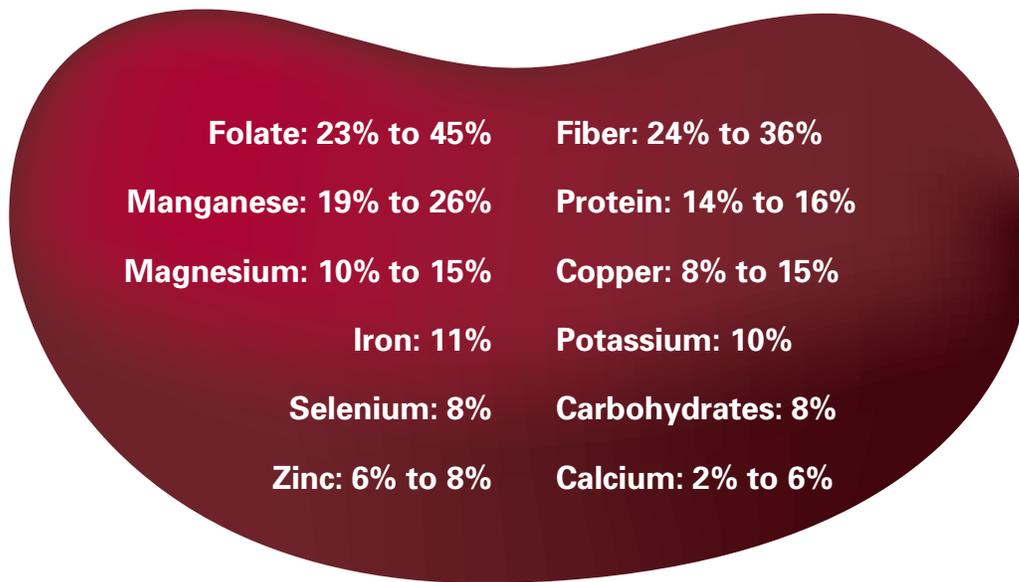

12 Key Nutrients in Beans

Despite myriad differences in shapes, sizes, colors, textures and flavors, beans are surprisingly similar in nutrient composition. While beans are naturally low in calories, sodium and sugar, very low in fat and are cholesterol-free, they are also good to excellent sources of several key nutrients.

The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Report determined that calcium, magnesium, iron and fiber are likely to fall short of nutritional goals if the recommended 3 cups of legumes, such as beans, a week are not included in the diet. (USDA, 2004)

One-half cup of cooked beans provides the following Daily Value (DV):



Calcium is important for building bones in children and adolescents and for preventing bone-thinning.

Carbohydrates, including complex carbohydrates (starches), are an important source of energy and beans contain a resistant starch, which may play a role in weight management.

Copper is key for iron absorption, efficient utilization of oxygen and for combating free radicals that can cause cell damage.

Fiber includes both soluble fiber for lowering cholesterol, regulating blood sugar and maintaining bacterial balance in the intestinal tract, and insoluble fiber, for relieving constipation.

Folate is important for women of childbearing age to reduce the risk of a group of birth defects known as neural tube defects, in which the spinal cord doesn't develop properly. Folate may also play a role in preventing or slowing some of the cognitive decline that occurs with age.

Iron functions primarily as a carrier of oxygen in the blood and is particularly important for children and adolescents, as well as women of child-bearing age. For vegetarians, beans provide a much-needed source of iron.

Magnesium is key for building bone, regulating blood sugar, promoting normal blood pressure and keeping the heart rhythm steady.

Manganese helps in formation of bone and in metabolism of protein, fat and carbohydrates.

Potassium aids in controlling high blood pressure.

Protein has many important functions in the body and is essential for growth and maintenance.

Selenium regulates thyroid function, synthesizing DNA, preventing oxidative damage to cells, boosting immunity and reducing inflammation.

Zinc is responsible for stimulating the activity of approximately 100 enzymes that are needed for biochemical reactions in the body to take place. It plays an important role in the immune system, wound healing, DNA synthesis and maintaining the sense of taste and smell.
