

Build a Healthy Plate With Dry Beans and Peas

Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program



Dry beans and peas are unique foods. They are nutritious, inexpensive, and creditable as either a vegetable or a meat alternate in the CACFP meal pattern. They are great sources of protein, iron, zinc, folate, and fiber. Most children 2 years and older do not consume enough vegetables, including dry beans and peas. You can help by offering beans and peas on your menu. Offering dry beans and peas as part of a meal or snack can:



- **Help children feel full longer and maintain a healthy weight as they grow.**
- **Promote proper digestion and make children’s “potty time” easier by providing dietary fiber.**
- **Add shape, texture, and flavor to children’s plates.**

What types of dry beans and peas should I offer?

- ▶ **Cooked, canned, or frozen dry beans and peas are all great choices.**
- ▶ **Mix things up by providing different types of beans and peas each week to help children get the nutrition they need, as well as taste new foods.**



CACFP Crediting Tips:

- **Because of their high nutrient content, cooked, mature (dry) beans and peas may be considered both as a vegetable and meat alternate. However, they cannot be credited as both a vegetable and a meat alternate in the same meal. (See the Vegetable as well as the Meat and Meat Alternate tip sheets on pages 9 and 19 for more information.)**
- **Some beans and peas, such as lima beans, green peas, snap peas, and green (string) beans, are fresh, immature beans and peas that can be served as “vegetables.” They are not “dry beans and peas” in CACFP, and cannot be served as a meat alternate.**

How can I reduce sodium and solid fats when serving dry beans and peas?

Since dry or frozen beans and peas are naturally low in sodium (salt) and solid fats, prepare and serve beans and peas without adding too much salt or solid fats like butter, stick margarine, cream sauces, and regular, full-fat cheese. Here’s how:

- ▶ **Choose the easiest form: Use canned, precooked beans.** They will simplify recipes and reduce cooking times. Purchase canned beans labeled “no salt added” or “low sodium.” If these are not available, rinse and drain the canned beans to reduce the sodium content.
- ▶ **Pour the bag of dry beans into a bowl of water on the kitchen counter.** Soak dry beans overnight without adding any salt, and discard the soaking water and cook the next day.

more 'reduce sodium and solid fats' tips on next page ...

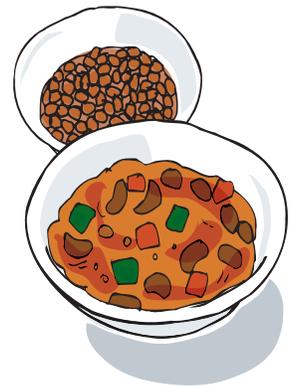


... more 'reduce sodium and solid fats' tips



- ▶ **Choose fat-free refried beans, or reduced-sugar and reduced-sodium versions of baked beans.**
- ▶ **Use herbs or no-salt spice mixes instead of salt, butter, or stick margarine to season bean dishes.** This will lower solid fats, sodium, and calories in the dishes while adding flavor. Garlic, celery, onion, and carrots complement the flavors of dry beans and peas.

- ▶ **Add beans to children's favorite foods.** Add beans and peas to pastas, tacos, casseroles, stews, and side dishes. Make “Mexican Pizza” by topping whole-wheat pita bread with refried beans, tomato salsa, spinach, and shredded low-fat cheese.
- ▶ **Make food fun.** Add kidney and pinto beans in chili and serve it in a baked sweet potato “chili boat.” Let children mash beans in a plastic baggie, and then make a “Smashed Bean Burrito” (using a whole-grain tortilla, spinach, and their favorite veggies). Sing a song while working with beans during a cooking demonstration or while mixing recipe ingredients. (Example song lyrics: “Mash, Mash, Mash the beans; Mash, Mash, Mash the beans.”)



- ▶ **Have a bean guessing game or taste-test.** Let children sample dishes that use dry beans or peas as main ingredients, and have children Name That Bean! Some ideas include lentil soup, bean dip, three-bean salad, or bean burgers.
- ▶ **Cook together.** Children learn about beans and peas when they help prepare them. Pick kitchen tasks that match children’s abilities. Children can help wash and dry the tops of canned beans, mash beans, pour water into a bowl of dry beans to soak overnight, or mix ingredients for a bean salad. http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles_Newsletter_31.pdf

Activities

How can I put this information into practice?

Take a look at your current weekly or cycle menu. Circle the menu items that feature dry beans and peas on your child care menu.



**Which new dry beans and peas listed below will you try on your menu?
Go for variety each week! Circle what you plan to try next month.**

Black beans	Navy beans
Black-eyed peas	Pinto beans
Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)	Soy beans
Kidney beans	Split peas
Lentils	White beans



CACFP Crediting Tip:
To credit as a vegetable or a meat alternate, make sure you include the full portion of beans and peas, depending on the meal and the age of the child.

How will you offer these dry beans and peas next month? As part of a:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Salad | <input type="checkbox"/> Spaghetti Sauce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sandwich | <input type="checkbox"/> Bean and Pasta Salad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Veggie Bean Burrito, Taco, or Quesadilla | <input type="checkbox"/> Soup or Stew (examples include lentil, split pea, or bean and macaroni soups) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kangaroo Pocket (veggies and mashed beans in a whole-wheat pita pocket) | <input type="checkbox"/> Snack |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mexican Pizza (using refried beans and veggies) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bean Dip or Hummus (puréed chickpeas served with veggie sticks) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rice and Bean Dish | <input type="checkbox"/> Stir-Fry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Veggie Roll-Up (mashed beans wrapped in a whole-grain tortilla with veggies and ranch dressing) | <input type="checkbox"/> Casserole |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet Potato Chili Boat | <input type="checkbox"/> Main Dish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pasta Dish or Lasagna Meal | <input type="checkbox"/> Meatless Meal |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> One Pot Meal (with whole grains, veggies, and beans in a slow cooker) |