

LEGUMES



WHAT ARE LEGUMES?

While often used interchangeably, the terms legumes, pulses, and beans have different meanings. A legume is a plant that produces seeds in pods. A pulse is the dried, edible seed of a legume. It consists of:

- **Beans** (adzuki, black, cannellini, fava, kidney, lima, navy, pinto)
- **Peas** (black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans [chickpeas], split peas)
- **Lentils** (brown, green, red/yellow)

NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS OF LEGUMES

There are three key nutritional benefits:

- Legumes provide a range of essential nutrients for children to grow and develop. As part of an overall healthy diet, they may help reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases.
- Legumes are rich in **iron, potassium, folate, and zinc**, naturally low in fat and sodium, and free of saturated fat and cholesterol.
- They are also an excellent source of **fiber**, helping children feel full longer and important for gut health.



LEGUMES CAN BE SERVED AS A MEAT ALTERNATE OR VEGETABLE, BUT NOT AS BOTH IN THE SAME MEAL.

MEAT ALTERNATE OR VEGETABLE?

The nutrition found in legumes is similar to foods in the Vegetables and Meat Alternates components in the CACFP.

- Like vegetables, legumes are excellent fiber, folate, and potassium sources.
- Like meat alternates, legumes are excellent plant protein, iron, and zinc sources.

Legumes can be served as a meat alternate or vegetable, but not as both in the same meal.

Green string beans, green peas, and snap peas are not considered legumes or pulses. These beans and peas are harvested while still immature, with the entire pod being eaten. They can only be credited as vegetables, not as meat alternates.



FORMS OF LEGUMES

In addition to the many types, legumes are available in three forms:

- **Dried** legumes require soaking and longer cooking times.
- **Canned**, precooked legumes are efficient options (no soaking needed) to simplify recipes and reduce cooking times.
- **Frozen** legumes are a fast and easy option for menu planning.



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