NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION
FOR MOTHERS AND CAREGIVERS
Good Nutrition
Good nutrition is important at all stages of life. Food enables us to:

- Grow
- Learn
- Work
- Stay healthy

Health and nutrition are closely linked – a person must be wellnourished to be healthy, fight diseases and infections, while poor health can affect nutritional status.

A poorly nourished pregnant woman is likely to give birth to an underweight and unhealthy child who will have a poor start in life and is likely to have an underweight child herself.
The foetus and children under the age of two have high nutrient needs because their bodies are growing and changing quickly, even before birth.

Families that don’t eat the right food in the right quantities become undernourished since their bodies are not getting sufficient nutrients to function well, also, their farm productivity is affected leading to poor food stock and consumption.

While well-nourished families, are healthy and able to produce more food and make more income.
Eating too much food than the body requires results in the body becoming over-nourished. A poor diet does not contain all the right food in the right quantities; this diet does not meet family nutrition needs.

A good diet is one that supplies our body with the right nutrients in right amounts. A good diet is formed from diverse food sources.
Cooking Beans

Whether you are using canned or dry beans, cooking beans can be simple! Beans can be added to soups, stews, salads, dips, and even dessert. Dry beans need to be cleaned and soaked before adding to a recipe, while canned beans can be used immediately.

**Why Should I Soak My Dry Beans?**

1. **Reduce Cooking Time**
Soaked dry beans cook faster than unsoaked ones. As beans soak, they absorb water which helps the inside and outside of the bean to cook evenly.

2. **Reduce Digestive Issues**
Beans contain fibers which may cause digestive issues such as gas and bloating. As you soak your beans, some of these fibers are released into the water making them less likely to cause gas.

**Are beans good during pregnancy?**
Yes, beans are good during pregnancy. Besides providing protein and fiber, they are also good sources of key nutrients such as iron, folate, calcium, and zinc which are important for the mother and her foetus.

**Are beans good for lactating mothers?**
Yes, it is perfectly safe for a breastfeeding mom to eat beans. Though many people believe that beans cause gas in a breastfed child, research generally says it doesn’t.
Are beans okay for babies to eat?
Beans can be among the first foods you introduce to your child. Beans are a plant-based food that provides key nutrients for a growing child, including protein, fiber, folate, magnesium, iron, and potassium, and are considered both a vegetable and protein food.

Nutritional Benefits of Beans for Babies
Beans are a good source of important micronutrients. These include potassium, magnesium, folate, iron, and zinc. They are also a good source of protein and are high in fiber and antioxidants.

How to Prepare Beans for Babies
• Soak beans in water before cooking and then discard the water to reduce gas.
• Rinse the beans after soaking and cook them in newly poured water.
• Don’t add spices to the beans when you first offer them to your baby.
• For younger babies, you can puree beans until they are smooth but for babies that are a little older, you can mash beans with a fork for a slightly lumpier texture.

When giving your baby beans, choose dried beans instead of canned. Canned foods tend to be high in salt and contain other preservatives.

Are Beans hard for babies to digest?
No, unless your child has a bean or legume allergy, all beans are safe for babies to eat.

How to Introduce Beans to babies
I. Start by introducing your child to 1 to 2 tablespoons of cooked, mashed beans.
II. Introduce beans for the first time when your baby isn’t full but not starving. If your baby is too hungry, she may be frustrated she’s not getting food fast enough. If she’s full, she
Beans can be among the first foods you introduce to your child. Beans are a plant-based food that provides key nutrients for a growing child, including protein, fiber, folate, magnesium, iron, and potassium, and are considered both a vegetable and protein food.

Nutritional Benefits of Beans for Babies

Beans are a good source of important micronutrients. These include potassium, magnesium, folate, iron, and zinc. They are also a good source of protein and are high in fiber and antioxidants.

How to Prepare Beans for Babies

• Soak beans in water before cooking and then discard the water to reduce gas.
• Rinse the beans after soaking and cook them in newly poured water.
• Don’t add spices to the beans when you first offer them to your baby.
• For younger babies, you can puree beans until they are smooth but for babies that are a little older, you can mash beans with a fork for a slightly lumpier texture.

When giving your baby beans, choose dried beans instead of canned. Canned foods tend to be high in salt and contain other preservatives.

Are Beans hard for babies to digest?

No, unless your child has a bean or legume allergy, all beans are safe for babies to eat.

How to Introduce Beans to babies

I. Start by introducing your child to 1 to 2 tablespoons of cooked, mashed beans.
II. Introduce beans for the first time when your baby isn’t full but not starving. If your baby is too hungry, she may be frustrated she’s not getting food fast enough. If she’s full, she may not be interested.
III. Don’t introduce beans when your baby is tired, cranky, or sick. It’s best to introduce a new food when a baby is well-rested and happy!
IV. If at first you don’t succeed, keep trying.
V. If your baby refuses, don’t force it. Pressuring a child to eat when he doesn’t want to may disrupt his internal hunger cues.

How Often Should beans be consumed?

• All people ages 2 and older should eat between 1 to 3 cups of beans per week. Serving beans at most meals and having young children eat along with the family is a great way to encourage healthy eating for your child and the entire family.
• Beans can be eaten every day without the consumer getting bored with them. They’re also incredibly cheap and easy to store.

Hygiene and safety during beans preparation

To avoid illness from improper handling, there are things to consider when preparing beans

• The person preparing the beans should wash their hands with soap and water before handling the beans.
• The dry beans should be inspected for any foreign materials such as small rocks or sticks and sorted.
• The sorted beans should then be rinsed thoroughly with clean safe water before soaking.
• After soaking with clean water, the beans should be wellcooked by cooking them thoroughly. Raw or undercooked beans can lead to food poisoning.
This work is part of the ZIRON Pulse Project on Upscaling adoption and exploitation of a wide diversity of Iron and Zinc-rich beans by rural populations in Africa.

Funding is from

The James Hutton Institute

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is a pan-African network that provides independent evidence to inform policy processes at national and regional levels.

For more information Contact
Beatrice Kiage
+254711641359