

Green beans are also known as string beans and are easily available in most markets. Their nutrient content includes fibre, vitamins, minerals and less carbohydrates. Here we discuss other benefits.

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French beans can fight disease, aid weight loss

There is more to love about French beans apart from their crispy texture and delicious taste. According to Dr Catherine Nanozi, a nutritionist, French beans are loaded with key nutrients such as fibre, vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin K, potassium, iron, magnesium, calcium, zinc, copper, and selenium that fight against a multitude of illnesses thus ensuring health for our bodies.

Weight loss

French beans are popular for their weight loss benefits because they are very low in calories, contain minimal amounts of sodium, cholesterol and saturated fats. Josephine Karungi, who describes herself as a vegetable addict, says she cannot remember the last time she ate a meal without French beans. I have been gorging on French beans for almost three years now.

"It started with a visit to my doctor who told me I was overweight and needed to lose about 30 kilogrammes. This seemed like such an impossible task since I had not weighed under 50 kilogrammes since my university days," narrates Karungi.

In addition to exercising regularly, Karungi says her doctor directed her to eat French beans and drink a lot

of water. "I thought he had just said French beans to mean vegetables but he insisted that he meant French beans," Karungi recounts. Karungi, who has since lost the required kilos narrates that she went berserk eating French beans with every meal, mixed with meats or vegetables and snacking on them.

"Another way French beans support weight loss is by aiding proper digestion since they have a high fibre content, which is key in helping the muscles of the large and small intestine to work properly. They add bulk to and soften your stool through water retention which prevents or relieves constipation," Dr Nanozi says.

In addition, the dietary fibre reduces high cholesterol levels in the body by decreasing the re-absorption of cholesterol binding bile acids in the colon.

Heart

Because of their potassium content, French beans control blood pressure and help in maintaining a healthy heart. "And because they are rich in

folates, when consumed during pregnancy, they help in the healthy growth and development of the baby's heart thus protecting the foetus from neural-tube defects," Dr Nanozi explains further.

BUYING AND STORAGE

Nalongo Scovia Guluddene, a green grocer at Kenjoy Supermarket Bukoto says the best French beans have a vibrant green colour and a smooth texture. "They should be firm and make a snapping sound when you open them. French beans can remain fresh for about a week or you can freeze them for up to six months," she adds.

HIV

A study published in *Phytomedicine* in 2010 examined the effect of a specific nutrient called hemagglutinin in French beans on fungus, tumours, and HIV. It was discovered that French beans had a positive effect on all three, but the most interesting effect was how they inhibited HIV. French beans significantly inhibited reverse transcription in HIV-1 cells, which is the most common HIV worldwide. The

study suggests that these beans, along with antiretroviral therapy and other HIV-fighting foods like spirulina, can be part of a long-term treatment solution for HIV patients.

French beans also contain high levels of vitamin C that acts as a powerful antioxidant that helps in fighting harmful free radicals and helps strengthen the body's immune system.

