

Black Bean Soup

Among the most inexpensive of foods, dried beans offer a bounty of fiber, iron, protein, folic acid and B vitamins. Black beans, also known as “turtle beans,” are an especially tasty variety, and make a lovely soup. Do not salt dried beans until they are cooked, as the salt slows down the softening process. On another note, so-called “cooking” wines or sherries contain lots of added salt. Do your palate and your body a favor and use a drinkable sherry in this recipe.



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound black beans
- 1/3 bay leaf
- 1 large onion, sliced
- Salt to taste
- A few cloves of chopped garlic
- 1 tsp dry mustard powder
- 1 cup dry sherry (not cooking sherry)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Pick over beans to remove any dirt, stones or foreign objects. Wash well, then soak for 8 hours in ample cold water.
2. Place beans and soaking liquid in a large saucepan with 1/3 bay leaf and bring to a boil over high heat. Skim off foam, lower heat, and simmer, partially covered, till beans are just tender, about 1 hour.
3. Add onion and continue to cook until onion melts into liquid, about 1 more hour.
4. Add salt to taste and garlic. Continue to cook, adding a little boiling water if necessary, until beans are very soft and start to melt into liquid, about 1-2 hours more.
5. Remove bay leaf and turn off heat. Ladle beans in batches into blender or food processor and puree or use an immersion blender and puree soup directly in the saucepan.
6. Add dry mustard powder and dry sherry. Reheat and serve, adding any garnishes you wish, such as slices of lemon or freshly chopped herbs.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION	
Per serving:	103 calories
total fat	3 g
sat fat	0 g
carbohydrate	19 g
protein	3 g
fiber	4 g
sodium	220 mg

Source: [Southbeachdiet.com](http://southbeachdiet.com)



Vim & Vigor

A Health Newsletter Serving the North Coast Schools Medical Insurance Group

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Editor: Mendie Ballester

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Director's Note

Stacy Lane - JPA Director

This month I want to address questions I've had regarding the change of our third-party administrator from Blue Cross of California to Blue Shield of California. If you have any additional questions, or suggestions for next month's Vim & Vigor, please feel free to contact the JPA office at (707) 445-7126.

Why did the JPA Board of Directors decide to change TPAs?

This was a very long, thought-out decision by the Board of Directors. It included nearly a year of research, input from union members, and advice from our brokers, actuary and other consultants. In the end, the decision was reached that the JPA Board must do what is in the best interest of the members of the program to keep the cost of medical coverage down. The hard dollars we save by this move will directly impact the amount we have to take in rate increases to cover our expected claims utilization. The soft dollar costs (claims management, condition management, etc.) we save will also help us decrease the bottom line on rates. The vast majority of members now contribute some amount towards the cost of healthcare for their family. The Board is focused on doing everything possible to preserve coverage while minimizing future increases in cost to members.

Will our plan coverage change? No. The benefits for the Redwood, Oak, Spruce and HSA plans are designed and owned wholly by the JPA. They are our documents and do not belong to either Blue Cross or Blue Shield. Any changes to the plan design are approved by the JPA Board of Directors.

What doctors participate the Blue Shield network?

To access the PPO provider directory on Blue Shield's website go to <http://www.blueshieldca.com> and click on the link that says "Find a Provider." Nearly 98% of all providers with Blue Cross are also contracted with Blue Shield. Staff has spent considerable time working with Blue Shield, identifying those providers who are not contracted and working to have them sign contracts. Contracting is a delicate balance for all parties involved. Many of the providers who have recently signed contracts do not yet show up on the web listing. We won't know about others until closer to the end of the year. Be assured that this is the number one issue on our plate for this transition. On another note, I understand there are quite a few chiropractic contracts. This is great news as we only have seven chiropractors currently contracted with Blue Cross in Humboldt County!

Will our pharmacy coverage change too? Not at all. The pharmacy program is run through CVS/Caremark and is not changing.

Did you know?

- The mere scent of peppermint helps you focus and boosts performance, according to researchers. Another study discovered that peppermint tea makes drivers more alert and less anxious. Try it as a substitute for coffee or soda next time you need an energy pick me up.

Taken from Health. Yahoo

- This issue and a year's worth of back issues of the Vim & Vigor can be found on the North Coast Schools Medical Insurance Group website: www.ncsmig.org and the Humboldt County Office of Education website under JPA services.

The Pressure's On

Cutting back on soda and other sugary beverages may lower your blood pressure. In a 1½ year study of people with pre-hypertension or hypertension, blood pressure fell by 1.8 points (systolic) over 1.1 points (diastolic) among those who cut out one serving a day of soft drinks or other sugar-sweetened beverages. A 3-point drop in systolic pressure would reduce stroke deaths by 8% and heart disease deaths by 5% nationwide.

Source: Nutrition Action Health Newsletter Aug. 2010



Ease Arthritis Pain

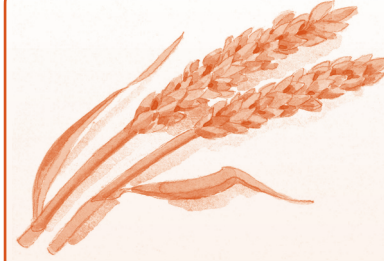


Regular exercise can reduce pain and improve flexibility so you can do all the things you love. In fact, it may even help you cut down on your use of over-the-counter and prescription drugs. Here are two moves that target common arthritis pain spots.

1. **Protect Your Knees:** This exercise strengthens the quadriceps, the muscles in the front of the thighs that support your knees. Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Loop an exercise band around your left ankle, or use a light ankle weight. Rest your palms on the sides of the chair for support. Slowly lift your left foot until your leg is straight. Hold for a second or two, then slowly lower. Continue until your leg feels tired, then repeat with your right leg.
2. **Stretch Your Hips:** This exercise stretches as well as strengthens the muscles of the hips. Lying on your back, bend both knees together, and bring them toward your chest. Then slowly move them in an ever-widening circle, keeping your lower spine on the floor. After you do 5 to 10 circles, switch direction. Then slowly come back to your original position.

Source: Prevention.com

A Guide to Whole Grains



Grains are an essential part of a healthy eating plan because carbohydrates provide fuel for the body. But not all carbs are created equal. Whole grains (as opposed to refined grains) are considered good carbs because they contain important nutrients like fiber, which helps slow down digestion, stabilize blood-sugar levels, and ward off hunger and cravings. Studies show that eating whole grains instead of refined grains can help to lower total cholesterol, LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, and high triglyceride and insulin levels.

What exactly does it mean when something is labeled whole grain? It means that the entire kernel of the grain, which is made up of the bran, germ, and endosperm, is left intact during processing. Each part of the grain has different health properties, including fiber, minerals, and antioxidants. Refined grains, on the other hand, like those found in white bread, white rice, white pasta, and certain snack foods, are highly processed, which means that the healthful bran and germ have been removed. While processing increases a product’s shelf life, it also makes the grain essentially devoid of fiber and other nutrients. Not only are refined grains less nutritious, they are digested more quickly. The result? Large swings in blood-sugar levels, cravings for more refined carbs, and constant hunger.

There are many excellent whole-grain choices, so how do you choose the healthiest? For starters, when buying whole-grain pastas, breads, and other products, be sure to check that the label says “100% whole wheat” or “whole grain.” If the label uses words like “multigrain” or “100% wheat,” there’s no guarantee that the product is truly whole grain. Also make sure that the product contains 3 grams of sugar or less per serving and has no trans fats.

Source: Southbeachdiet.com

