

# How to Avoid Food Poisoning from Undercooked Beans

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Co-authored by [wikiHow Staff](#) and **30 contributors**

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Undercooked beans may seem fairly innocent, if a little gross. However, they can cause food poisoning if you're not careful to cook them properly. The problem is caused by a plant lectin, phytohaemagglutinin or hemagglutinin. If the beans are not cooked properly, it can cause a broad range of digestive problems with a variety of symptoms.

Part  
1

## Part 1 of 2: Cooking Beans Properly











**1 Soak the beans overnight.** Soaking the beans helps remove the harmful plant lectin, hemagglutinin. Cover them in clean water with an inch or two extra at the top. Place a lid over them. Leave them to soak overnight.<sup>[1]</sup>

- Discard the water before cooking.



**2 Give beans a quick boil before cooking.** After the beans have been soaking, it's a good idea to boil them to remove any remaining hemagglutinin. Bring the beans to a boil, and let them boil for 10 minutes before cooking as you normally would.<sup>[2]</sup>

 <p><b>Red Lentils</b> Cook 20-30 min.</p>	 <p><b>Black Turtle Beans</b> Cook 45-60 min.</p>	 <p><b>Fava or Broad Beans</b> Cook 40-60 min.</p>	
 <p><b>Great Northern Beans</b> Cook 45-60 min.</p>	 <p><b>Chickpeas</b> Cook 1.5-2.5 hours</p>	 <p><b>Kidney Beans</b> Cook 1-1.5 hours.</p>	 <p><b>Lima Beans</b> Cook 60-90 min.</p>



**3 Cook your beans thoroughly.** The best way to avoid food poisoning from beans is to ensure they are cooked thoroughly. Each type of bean takes a different amount of time to cook, so read the back of the package, or find a chart on the web for the style of cooking you plan to use. You can choose to boil them, cook them in a pressure cooker, or use a slow-cooker. Beans should be soft and tender when they're done.[3]

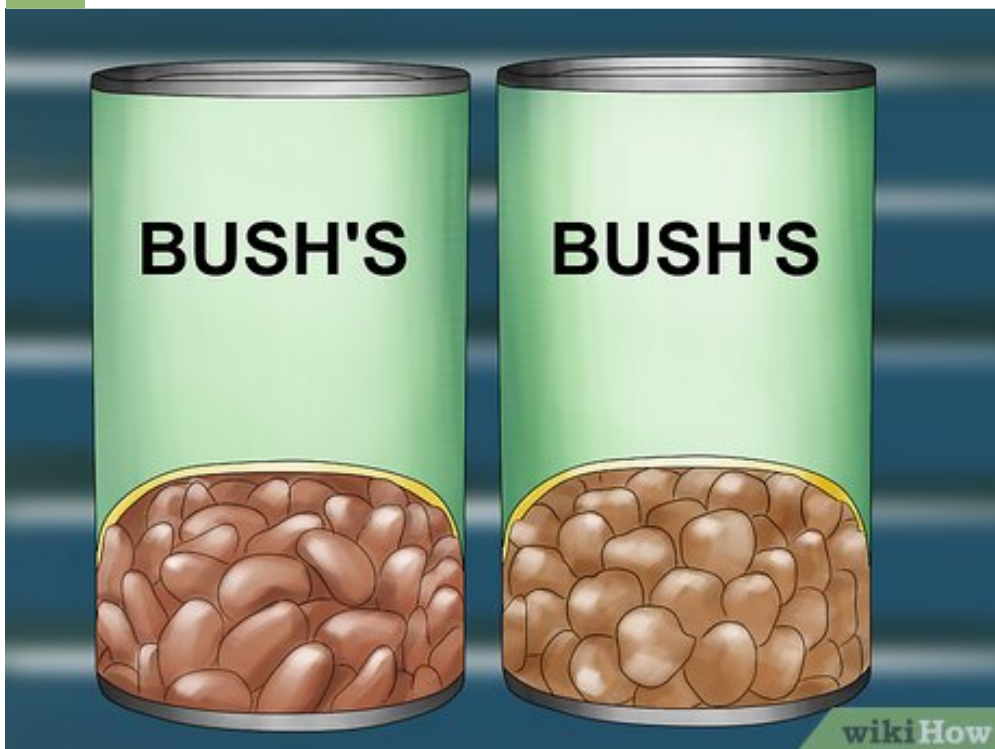
- Several beans need only a relatively short cooking time: **red lentils** (cook 20-30 minutes, pressure cook 5-7 minutes), **black (turtle) beans** (boil for 45-60 minutes, pressure cook 15-20 minutes), fava or **broad beans** (cook for 45-60 minutes, don't pressure cook), and **great northern** (cook 45- 60 minutes, pressure cook 4-5 minutes).
- Some need a bit longer: **chickpeas** (cook 1.5 to 2.5 hours, pressure cook 15-20 minutes), **kidney beans** (cook 1 to 1.5 hours, pressure cook for 10 minutes), **lima beans** (cook 60-90 minutes, don't use pressure cooker), and **pinto beans** (cook 1.5 hours, pressure cook 10 minutes).



**4 Skim off the foam if you prefer.** Beans produce foam at the top of the pot when you boil them. This foam is harmless, however, and it will be reabsorbed by the broth. However, you can skim it off if you'd like.<sup>[4]</sup>

Part  
2

## Part 2 of 2: Staying Safe



**1 Opt for canned beans.** If you're really worried about food poisoning, canned beans are a safer option than dried beans. They are already thoroughly cooked in the can, so you don't have to worry about cooking them.





**2 Choose beans that are lower risk.** Red kidney beans have the highest concentrations of hemagglutinin, so they put you the most at risk. If you're worried, pick a bean with a lower concentration, such as cannellini beans or broad beans.<sup>[5]</sup>

- Chickpeas also contain much less hemagglutinin than red kidney beans, and lentils have an even smaller amount.



**3 Recognize the symptoms.** If you do eat undercooked beans, look for symptoms of food poisoning. You may have nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. You may also have cramps or abdominal pain. Generally, these symptoms appear within 3 hours of eating the beans. Visit urgent care or the ER if your symptoms are severe.<sup>[6]</sup>



## Community Q&A

#### Question

**I enjoy crunchy beans as a healthy substitute for peanuts. How can I cook them to be both crunchy and safe to destroy the poisons in them?**



Community Answer

One option is boiling them according to the bean type and then roasting the beans. Roasting involves patting the beans dry, cutting them in a bit of oil, and putting them in the oven until crispy.

Helpful 16 Not Helpful 4

#### Question

**Can you eat broad beans raw?**



Community Answer

You shouldn't eat any beans raw, as that can be dangerous. You can eat beans raw from a can, though, just not dried beans.

Helpful 6 Not Helpful 7

#### Question

**Can red kidney beans cause severe chest pain?**



Community Answer

It's unlikely that they will cause chest pain, though it is possible they could cause indigestion, which may present as chest pain.

Helpful 5 Not Helpful 2

#### Question

**I eat cooked beans every day. Is that bad?**



**AbigailAbernathy**  
Top Answerer

Nope. Beans are a part of a healthy diet and are a great plant source of protein and fiber! It's safe to eat them daily, as long as they are cooked properly.

Helpful 11 Not Helpful 3

#### Question

**Are canned baked beans safe to eat the next day if they were not refrigerated after cooking?**



Community Answer

No. You should eat any food that would normally be refrigerated and has been left at room temperature for more than 1 to 2 hours. This is because bacteria starts to form 1 hour after cooking. Also, most canned foods don't contain enough preservatives to prevent bacterial growth, as the canning is the preservative.

Helpful 17 Not Helpful 17

#### Question

**What happens if boiled beans don't cook properly and cool down. Can I reboil them again to cook "properly"?**



Community Answer

You should be able to boil them again to finish cooking them. However, if any food stays too long at room temperature, bacteria can grow. Therefore, make sure you haven't kept the beans too long at room temperature before boiling them again.

Helpful 9 Not Helpful 9

#### Question

**Can you eat soaked pinto beans cooked in slow cooker if they weren't boiled first?**



Community Answer

They should be fine, as long as you cook them thoroughly. The cooking time is the most important part.

Helpful 5 Not Helpful 13

#### Question

**If I have already added bad beans to a dish, is there any way to save it?**



Community Answer

No, it's better not to risk it. Theoretically if you could remove all the beans you could save the rest of the dish, but do you really want to try that? If there's a chance of even one undercooked bean remaining in the food, you are risking food poisoning.

Helpful 6 Not Helpful 4

#### Question

**Do freshly-picked young French or runner beans in pods, straight from the garden, need more than a few minutes of cooking?**



Community Answer

Yes, they also contain lectins (phytohaemagglutinin), but at much much lower levels. Cut finely and boil or steam for 10 minutes.

Helpful 5 Not Helpful 3

### Question

## How do I know if beans are safe to eat?



Community Answer

You will know they are safe if you have hard boiled them for 10 minutes and simmered them for the minimum time that that particular bean requires. The resulting beans will be piping hot and completely compressible with a fork. There will be no crunch. It can still look like a soaked bean. Some beans (very few varieties) don't require soaking and hard boiling. If you are unsure, hard boil for 10 minutes and cook until completely soft. This is the same for slow cookers where you may need an extra pan for the fast boil first before transferring. The pressure cooker usually boils for 10 minutes in total (coming up to temperature and the releasing). But you should do a minimum 10 mins and natural release to be sure.

Helpful 1 Not Helpful 0

[See more answers](#)

## References

1. ↑ <http://wildoats.com/blog-posts/undercooked-beans-dangerous/>
2. ↑ <https://www.thoughtco.com/food-poisoning-from-beans-3975994>
3. ↑ <http://weblife.org/beanchart.html>
4. ↑ <http://www.finecooking.com/ingredient/butter-beans>
5. ↑ <http://wildoats.com/blog-posts/undercooked-beans-dangerous/>
6. ↑ <https://www.thoughtco.com/food-poisoning-from-beans-3975994>

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wikiHow Staff Writer

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