

Answering Your Questions About Beta-Glucans in Food

Nutrition science • Research synthesis • Patient education

My role: Research • Content strategy • SEO • Writing

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At a glance: An evidence-based exploration of beta-glucans, a type of dietary fiber found in foods such as oats and barley. The article answers practical questions about how beta-glucans work, dietary sources, recommended intake, and how cooking may affect them. It distinguishes established nutrition benefits from emerging cancer research.

Below the excerpt, see [SEO elements](#) and [Sources](#).

Excerpt

Beta-glucans are a type of fiber linked to several positive health effects, like helping to control blood pressure and cholesterol. They may also boost the immune system. Because of these qualities, cancer patients may have questions about beta-glucans in food and how they work.

1: How Do Beta-Glucans Impact My Health?

Beta-glucans are a dietary fiber. This means the human body can't break them down (digest them). But just because our bodies can't digest beta-glucans doesn't mean they aren't helpful. These molecules can produce many useful outcomes.

Since our stomachs don't break down beta-glucans, these fibers reach the large intestine undigested. Once there, the fibers interact with gut microorganisms, like bacteria. These interactions have the potential to positively affect health.

Cereals are one of our primary sources of food beta-glucans. Oats and barley have high concentrations of the molecule. A diet rich in cereal beta-glucans is linked to a number of beneficial effects, including:

- Lowering and controlling blood sugar
- Lowering cholesterol
- Lowering the risk of colon cancer
- Increasing cell-protecting (antioxidant) activity
- Supporting gut health

Beta-glucans are also found in certain mushrooms (maitake and shiitake mushrooms), seaweeds and brewer's yeast. We don't know if these other sources of beta-glucan have the same health benefits as those from cereals.

2: How Much Beta-Glucan Do I Need to Eat?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says that eating 3 grams of beta-glucan per day can help reduce cholesterol. People who eat fiber-rich diets may already be getting enough beta-glucan.

The following foods contain the recommended daily amount:

- **Barley:** 1/2 cup cooked barley contains about 4 grams of beta-glucan.
- **Oats:** 1 cup cooked oats contains about 3.2 grams of beta-glucan.

[Q&A continues]

What Does This Mean for Cancer Patients?

Diet and nutrition are important for everyone. Some diets are linked to a lower risk of developing cancer. Certain food choices may help cancer patients manage treatment side effects.

Eating a diet rich in beta-glucans may provide benefits that help improve a cancer patient's overall health. This is important since overall health can impact prognosis and eligibility for surgery.

Researchers are also looking into using purified forms of beta-glucans to help treat cancers like mesothelioma. Depending on study results, purified beta-glucans may one day become complementary therapies that help ease symptoms and treatment side effects. It is unclear if food sources of beta-glucan have the cancer-fighting properties that early data suggests the purified forms may have. But additional research may help answer this question.

SEO Elements

Title Tag: 4 Common Questions About Beta-Glucans in Food

Meta Description: Beta-glucans are a type of fiber with several noted health benefits. Learn the answers to common questions about how they work and where to find them.

Sources

- Healthline. [What Is Beta Glucan? The Heart-Healthy Fiber Explained.](#)
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