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Enjoy this quick, easy, good-for-you soup! According to the Beans for Health Alliance ([www.beansforhealth.com](http://www.beansforhealth.com)), eating beans regularly may help:

- Lower risk of colon cancer,
- Reduce blood cholesterol, as well as LDL or “bad cholesterol,” leading causes of heart disease,
- Lower risk of type 2 diabetes,
- Improve diabetes control for existing type 1 and 2 diabetics,
- Strengthen immune system through improved nutrition status to combat HIV/AIDS.

Did you know Nebraska ranks first in the nation in the production of Great Northern Beans?

### Italian White Bean Soup (Makes 4 servings)

**2 cans (15.5 ounces each) white kidney beans (cannellini) or Great Northern beans, drained and rinsed**  
**4 cups non-fat, reduced sodium chicken broth, divided**  
**1/2 cup chopped onion**  
**3 cloves garlic, minced**  
**1 can (16 ounce) whole tomatoes with no salt, undrained, chopped or 4-6 fresh plum tomatoes (peeled and chopped)**  
**2 teaspoons dried basil**  
**1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves**  
**1/8 teaspoon white pepper**

1. Combine one can of beans with two cups of the broth in a blender or food processor and blend until a smooth puree.
2. Transfer to a large saucepan. Stir in remaining ingredients.
3. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat and simmer, covered, 10 to 15 minutes or until beans and tomatoes reach desired tenderness.

Nutritional information per serving: 203 calories; 1 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat); 37 g carbohydrate; 12 g protein; 10 g dietary fiber; 744 mg sodium. Source of recipe: [www.aicr.org/information/recipe](http://www.aicr.org/information/recipe)

#### ALICE'S TIPS:

- Black pepper has a slightly hotter flavor than white pepper whose flavor is milder and more delicate. White pepper comes from the same plant and is left on the vine longer. Appearance is the reason white pepper is included in many recipes. For convenience, I used black pepper in this recipe and found it acceptable in flavor and appearance.
- Rather than using whole canned tomatoes and chopping them, you might use diced tomatoes.
- I didn't have dried basil when I tested this recipe and substituted 2-1/2 teaspoons Italian seasoning for the basil PLUS thyme.



### “Blooming” Chocolate Won't Hurt You

If the Valentine's Day chocolates you received develop some whitish discoloration on the surface, the chocolate is still safe to eat.

The whitish discoloration is called “fat bloom,” which occurs when cocoa butter separates from the crystallized chocolate mixture and comes to the surface. This usually happens when the chocolate is kept at a temperature of 70-75° F.

The discoloration also could be due to “sugar bloom,” which occurs when loosely wrapped chocolate is stored in the refrigerator. Moisture condenses on the surface and sugar from the chocolate dissolves in it. As the moisture evaporates, it leaves behind a crust of white sugar crystals.

One way to avoid white discoloration is to wrap and store chocolate carefully in a cool place but not in the refrigerator.

Source: Adapted slightly from an article by Dr. Barbara Struempfer, extension nutritionist, Alabama Cooperative Extension System [www.aces.edu/dept/extcomm/newspaper/chocolate2.html](http://www.aces.edu/dept/extcomm/newspaper/chocolate2.html)

## Fewer “Trips to the Attic” of the Food Guide Pyramid Create Great Health Benefits



The attic (or storage area) in our homes can be compared to the *attic* (top section) of the Food Guide Pyramid. We don't store items we use daily in the attic, just as foods high in fat, sugar and salt do not make up the major portion of our diet, if we want to lead a healthy life.

We often call foods from the five major food groups, our EVERYDAY FOODS. Other foods, which are high in fat, sugar and salt are SOME-TIMES FOODS. These are foods found in the *attic* of the pyramid. Let's take a brief look at each of these and consider how we can “go there” less often.

### Foods High in Fat

The obvious foods high in fat include all fried foods. Frying removes both water-soluble and fat-soluble vitamins and adds fat. Baking, broiling and steaming are just a few healthier cooking choices. Read the Nutrition Facts labels when purchasing prepared foods. Total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol are the first values listed. A serving that provides more than 30

percent of the daily value of fat is considered high. A value of 5 percent or less is considered low. Remember, the values listed are for only one serving. This information helps us balance our intake of fat. The type of fat we consume is also important. For example, vegetable oils which are liquid at room temperature are healthier than animal fats.

### Foods High in Sugar

Sugar is another “energy-producing” nutrient that can add calories to our diet. On the Nutrition Facts labels, sugars are listed in grams. To help visualize the sugar content of one serving, remember four grams = one teaspoon of sugar. If a 12 ounce beverage contains 40 grams of sugar, a person is consuming the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of

sugar. There are so many products containing sugar. These “empty” calories really add up.

### Foods High in Salt

Salt is a combination of sodium and chloride. Most Americans consume too much salt which contributes to hypertension (high blood pressure). Hypertension is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. *Salty* is very much a taste we acquire through our lifetime. Gradually and intentionally decrease salt intake. Leave the salt shaker off the table and replace it with a *no-salt* spice or spice combination. Pepper is just one healthy spice alternative.

Let's become healthier by taking fewer trips to the attic and enjoying those *everyday foods* low in fat, sugar and salt.

Our good health is worth it.



## Eating Well as We Age, Part 1

Editor's Note: This is part 1 of a two part article. Part 2 will be printed in the March NEBLINE.

Many older people have trouble eating well. Here is some information from the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, that tells why and gives ideas on what you can do about it. Using the food label is one way to eat well. There are others.

### Problem: Can't Chew

Do you have trouble chewing? If so, you may have trouble eating foods like meat and fresh fruits and vegetables.

**What to do:** Try other foods.

Instead of:

- fresh fruit
- raw vegetables
- meat
- sliced bread

Try:

- fruit juices and soft canned fruits, like applesauce, peaches and pears
- vegetable juices and creamed and mashed cooked vegetables
- ground meat, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, and foods made with milk, like pudding and cream soups
- cooked cereals, rice, bread pudding and soft cookies

### Problem: Upset Stomach

Stomach problems, like too much gas, may make you stay away from foods you think cause the problem. This means you could be missing out on important nutrients, like vitamins, calcium, fiber and protein.

**What to do:** Try other foods.

Instead of:

- milk
- vegetables like cabbage and broccoli
- fresh fruit

Try:

- milk foods that may not bother you, like cream soups, pudding, yogurt and cheese
- vegetable juices and other vegetables, like green beans, carrots and potatoes
- fruit juices and soft canned fruits

### Problem: Can't Shop

You may have problems shopping for food. Maybe you can't drive anymore. You may have trouble walking or standing for a long time.

**What to do:**

- Ask the local food store to bring groceries to your home. Some stores deliver free. Sometimes there is a charge.
- Ask your church or synagogue for volunteer help. Or

sign up for help with a local volunteer center.

- Ask a family member or neighbor to shop for you. Or pay someone to do it. Some companies let you hire home health workers for a few hours a week. These workers may shop for you, among other things. Look for these companies in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under “Home Health Services.”

### Problem: Can't Cook

You may have problems with cooking. It may be hard for you to hold cooking utensils, and pots and pans. Or, you may have trouble standing for a long time.

**What to do:**

- Use a microwave oven to cook TV dinners, other frozen foods and foods made up ahead of time by the store.
- Take part in group meal programs offered through senior citizen programs. Or, have meals brought to your home.
- Move to a place where someone else will cook, like a family member's home or a home for senior citizens.

**To find out about senior citizen group meals and home-delivered meals, call 1-800-677-1116. These meals cost little or no money.**