

Words on Wellness

Loving Lentils



Lentils are small but mighty members of the legume family. They come in various colors—green, brown, red, and black—and are known for their earthy flavor and versatility in cooking. Lentils are packed with plant-based protein, fiber, and essential nutrients, making them a smart choice!

A ½ cup of cooked lentils contains about 115 calories, 9 grams of protein, 20 grams of carbohydrates, and 8 grams of fiber. They're also a good source of iron, folate, potassium, and magnesium.

Health Benefits of Lentils

- **Weight management:** Fiber and protein help you feel full longer, which can support healthy weight goals.
- **Heart health:** Potassium and magnesium help regulate blood pressure, and fiber supports healthy cholesterol levels.
- **Blood sugar control:** Lentils do not raise blood sugar quickly, which is good for people with diabetes.
- **Digestive health:** Fiber promotes regular bowel movements and supports a healthy gut microbiome.

Nutritious, affordable, and easy to prepare, lentils are a simple way to add more plant-based power to your plate. Whether in soups, salads, or stews, lentils prove that small foods can have a big impact.

Sources: [Cleveland Health](https://www.clevelandhealth.org/), go.iastate.edu/MTMRIA
[Lentils.org](https://www.lentils.org/), go.iastate.edu/UWSIBM

Lentil Tacos

Serving Size: 2 tacos | Serves: 6

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon oil (canola or vegetable)
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, diced
- 1 cup dried lentils
- ½ package (1.25 ounces) of 40% less sodium taco seasoning
- 3 cups water
- 12 corn tortillas
- 1 cup salsa
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 cups lettuce, shredded

Directions:

1. Heat oil in a skillet over medium high heat. Add onion and garlic; cook for 4-6 minutes or until soft and fragrant. Stir several times during cooking.
2. Add lentils and seasoning. Stir until seasoning is mixed in.
3. Slowly add water and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium low and cover. Cook for 30 minutes or until lentils are tender.
4. Uncover and cook for 5 minutes more until mixture has thickened and liquid is absorbed. Mash slightly with a fork.
5. Heat corn tortillas according to package directions.
6. Spread ¼ cup lentil mixture onto each tortilla.
7. Serve with salsa, cheese, and lettuce.

Nutrition information per serving:

350 calories, 11g total fat, 4g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 20mg cholesterol, 480mg sodium, 51g total carbohydrate, 8g fiber, 4g sugar, 16g protein
This recipe is courtesy of ISU Extension and Outreach's Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website. For more information, recipes, and videos, visit [Spend Smart. Eat Smart.](https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu), spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu.

What Is a Food Desert, and Why Does It Matter?

Food deserts are areas where fresh foods are often not available. The health of rural or urban communities is affected when residents do not have access to foods like fresh produce or lean proteins. Many folks in food deserts must rely on convenience or dollar stores for their groceries, which tend to be highly processed foods with low nutritional value.

There are steps that individuals and communities may take to address food deserts, such as:

- Starting a neighborhood garden
- Supporting local producers and farmer's markets
- Encouraging local leaders to provide better access to fresh and healthy foods in their communities



Source: [Feeding America](https://www.feedingamerica.org/), go.iastate.edu/4WTTKA

Strong and Steady: Exercises to Help You Avoid Falls

Falls can be serious as we age. About 1 in 4 adults over 65 fall each year, and many need emergency care. Falls often result from balance problems, medications, home hazards, low blood pressure, or poorly fitting shoes. They frequently occur in bathrooms or dark bedrooms at night.

Exercises to Prevent Falls

Moving more helps you stay steady. Try these:

- Stand on one leg for a few seconds
- Walk heel-to-toe in a straight line
- Shift weight from one foot to the other

Activities like yoga and tai chi improve balance and flexibility. Strength training and short bursts of higher-intensity exercise keep fast-twitch muscle fibers strong. These muscles help you react quickly—like catching yourself when you stumble. They weaken with age, but exercise helps maintain them.

If you're worried about falling, talk to your health care provider. They can suggest safe exercises or refer you to a physical therapist for a custom plan. For easy balance exercises, watch this [video](#) from Spend Smart. Eat Smart., go.iastate.edu/53QGFD.

Practicing balance and building muscle daily lowers your risk of falling and helps you stay independent.

Sources: [John's Hopkins Medicine](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/), go.iastate.edu/EQE3BE
[Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org/), go.iastate.edu/JZ5MIT

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[extension.iastate.edu/
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If you or someone you know is skipping meals, going hungry, or choosing between food and medicine, call 1-855-944-3663 to apply for assistance today.

Call Iowa 2-1-1 or Iowa Lifelong Links, 1-866-468-7887, for additional resources.

