

Beans meanz a longer life

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Are there particular foods which are associated with a longer, healthier life?

A study of eating and ageing in several different cultures suggests there are, and it may well amount to a hill of beans. They dissected the diets of older people in Sweden, Greece, Japan and Melbourne and followed them for seven years.

Their benchmark was the Mediterranean diet - but as you can imagine that's not necessarily the way of eating in Sweden, Japan or Anglo Celtic Victoria. There are elements of the Mediterranean diet though which do appear in all these cultures. The question is which mattered?

What seemed to be associated with surviving those seven years were the amount of legumes - beans - you ate each day on average and the ratio of monounsaturated to saturated fat in your diet. Legumes include peas, lentils, soy beans and baked beans and the monounsaturated fat was mostly olive oil.

For every 20 grams of legumes a day the chances of dying were eight per cent lower over seven years. And for those on the highest mono to saturated ratio, the reduction was 40 per cent.

So you just need to make sure that the people next to you don't get wind of this.