

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**Good for More Than Beer**

Mention 'barley' in a mixed audience and the men at least are going to get a grin on their faces. Women might nod, or shake their heads. Say that we should include barley in our diets and the men are going to announce that they're more than willing to down a few more beers. It would be nice if we could get all the health benefits of barley in that form, but unfortunately, it doesn't happen. And unfortunately we lose out on a lot when we don't have barley in our regular diets.

Why should we eat barley, rather than drink it? If you're concerned about your cholesterol levels, if you have or might be on your way to getting diabetes, you're someone who would benefit from barley. For generations, other than making beer most barley was used in animal feeds. Lucky animals! Now it is our turn.

In many grains, unless we eat them in a whole grain form, we get starch but no fiber. Barley is rather unusual. In with the starch is a lot of fiber. It's a soluble fiber, not like the hard fiber from the outer hull of the grain. Not having to eat the outer hull means that most forms of barley cook a lot faster.

Most importantly though, the fiber in barley is very effective at lowering our cholesterol levels. People who eat barley on a regular basis, several times a week or more, usually see their total cholesterol, their 'bad' LDL cholesterol, and their triglyceride levels going down. Our 'good' HDL cholesterol levels don't go down! These are the results of studying almost 400 people in eight different projects, so it's likely it

will work for most of us. Less heart disease is a good idea!

There's other research that found that eating barley fiber made insulin more effective and lowered blood sugar levels, both in people who were pre-diabetic and who all ready had diabetes. Some of the studies used purified fiber added to baked goods, some of them added several servings of cooked barley to a regular diet. These studies were well-enough done that the FDA now allows barley to have a health claim on the package.

So, if you want to add barley to your diet, how do you do it? There are several forms of barley available. The most common kind is called *pearled barley*. This means that it's been polished enough to take most of the hard outer hull and bran off. That does remove some of the nutrients, but since the valuable fiber is mostly inside, it is still there. Pearled barley can be either regular or quick. Regular pearled barley takes 30 to 40 to cook, and absorbs more water than the quick kind.

Quick barley has been steamed and then dried. It only takes about 10 minutes to cook, the same as instant rice. But it has three times as much fiber as white rice, twice as much as brown rice. Rice fiber has no effect on our cholesterol levels, but barley does!

Other forms of barley that you might find in the store include barley *flakes*. These grains have been steamed and then rolled flat. They cook like rolled oats and can be used in just about any recipe that calls for rolled oats. *Scotch* barley, also called *pot* barley, has not been polished as much as pearled barley, so it has a little more nutritional value. But it also takes longer to cook. There are two forms of whole grain barley, *hulled and hull-less*. These have not been polished much at all, so they

have all their bran and fiber. But they take a very long time to cook. They're mostly available in health food stores. And barley flour is available some places.

Pearled, quick, pot and rolled barley can all be used like rice or oatmeal. Barley is great to add to soups and stews, can be added to casseroles, mixed into meatloaf or meat-balls, made into pilaf, eaten as breakfast cereal, any way you like.

Here's an easy way to get started with barley in your diet, and health for your heart. Use seasoned tomatoes for more flavor if you want.

Quick Beef and Barley Dinner

1/2 lb lean ground beef	1 C chopped onion
1 C chopped celery	1 C chopped green pepper
2 - 15 oz cans diced tomatoes	1 C frozen peas
2 carrots, peeled and diced	1 C pearled barley
2 C water	salt, pepper, paprika to taste

Brown ground beef in large skillet. Drain off as much fat as possible. Add the rest of ingredients, mix well, bring to boil, reduce heat to low and cover. Simmer 35-40 minutes. Serve hot. Serves 8.