

Healthy Carbohydrates

What are carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates come from a wide array of foods and in a variety of forms. The basic building blocks of a carbohydrate are sugar molecules. Sugars are small molecules that when strung together make more complex carbohydrates like starches and fiber.



The digestive system handles all carbohydrates in much the same way - it breaks them down into single sugar molecules, since only these are small enough to absorb into the bloodstream. It also converts most digestible carbohydrates into glucose (also known as blood sugar), because

cells are designed to use this as a universal energy source. Fiber is an exception. It is put together in such a way that it can't be broken down into sugar molecules, and so passes through the body mostly undigested.

What foods contain carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are found in many foods, and they provide over half the calories in a balanced diet. They can be found in the breads, cereals, and grains groups, as well as in the fruit group, the vegetable group, and the milk, yogurt, and cheese groups. In fact, carbohydrates are abundant in all food groups except the meat group.

Try This!

***Replace at least one product you eat on a regular basis with a whole grain version.
Look for the highest dietary fiber you can find in breads, tortillas, cereals, etc.***

Small changes are the place to start when trying to build a healthy foundation.

Low carb diets: How do they work?

Quite simply, they reduce calorie intake. By totally eliminating a food group from your diet, you naturally reduce your calories. But you also miss out on the vitamins, minerals and fiber that carbohydrates contribute to our diets. Be smart about carbs! Limit sugars and sweets, but eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains for a healthy, balanced diet.

Recommendations on working in the right carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are an important part of a healthy diet because they provide fuel for the body. Many foods rich in whole-grain carbohydrates are good sources of essential vitamins and minerals.

Carbohydrates from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains should give you the bulk of your calories. For optimal health, get your grains intact from foods such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole-grain pasta, and other possibly unfamiliar grains like quinoa, whole oats, and bulgur. Not only will these foods help protect you against a range of chronic diseases, they can also help with weight loss because they are high in fiber which makes us feel satisfied and slows the rate at which food passes out of our stomach

Until recently, you could only get whole-grain products in organic or non-traditional stores. Today they are popping up in more and more mainstream grocery stores. Here are some suggestions for adding more whole grains to your diet:

- Start the day with whole grains. If you're partial to hot cereals, try old-fashioned or steel-cut oats. If you're a cold cereal person, look for one that lists whole wheat, oats, barley, or other grain first on the ingredient list.
- Use whole-grain breads for lunch or snacks. Check the label to make sure that whole wheat or other whole grain is the first ingredient listed.
- Limit white potatoes. Instead, try brown rice or less common grains like bulgur, wheat berries, millet, or hulled barley with your dinner.
- Pick up some whole wheat pasta. If the whole-grain products are too chewy for you, look for those that are made with half whole-wheat flour and half white flour.
- Look for whole grain products of all kinds: Use whole wheat tortillas when you make burritos, whole wheat English muffins and bagels for your morning snack.

Food Companies know what you want!

Food companies make it more difficult than it should be to spot a whole-grain food. They often make foods sound like they're wholegrain and healthy when they aren't.

That means you must read food labels carefully. True wholegrain products list as the main ingredient whole wheat, whole oats, whole rye, or some other whole grain. If the label says "made with wheat flour" it may be an intact grain product or it may just be advertising wheat flour.

