

Carbohydrates

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Carbohydrates are one of three macronutrients (protein, fat, carbohydrates) that the body needs for survival. They are called 'macro' due to the large quantities in which they need to be consumed. Carbohydrates (carbs) are the body's main energy source, powering the central nervous system and providing quick energy for working muscles. Carbs are sugars, starches and fibers found in fruits, grains, legumes, vegetables and milk products.

Carbs are divided into two main categories; simple and complex.

Simple carbohydrates are sugars that are already in their simplest form and cannot be broken down further. Also called monosaccharide's (one sugar), these sugars include glucose, fructose, and galactose which are found in fruit and milk products. They are the building blocks of disaccharides (two sugars) such as sucrose and lactose, which are found in foods like table sugar, dairy products, beer and vegetables. Highly processed grains and refined sweeteners fall into this category of carbohydrates because of how quickly they are absorbed by the body and how they affect blood sugar levels. They also have little to no nutritional value. Examples of these foods are candies, soda, syrups, pastries, prepackaged convenience foods, pasta, white rice, white bread, white flour products, white sugar and low fat milk products.

Complex carbohydrates are polysaccharides (3+ sugars) such as cellulose and starch. These carbs are foods that are high in fiber. High fiber foods or complex carbohydrates are digested slower. This helps slow the absorption of sugars, helping to keep blood sugar levels in check. This means that instead of having spikes of high energy from high amounts of sugar hitting the blood stream all at once as with simple carbs, you will have a slower, steady stream of sugars

providing lasting energy without the subsequent sugar crash. These foods include beans, peas, lentils, nuts, potatoes (with skin), corn, parsnips and other root vegetables, as well as whole grain breads and cereals. Fiber is also beneficial for cleansing the bowel, aiding digestion and keeping cholesterol levels healthy.



All of the sugars found in both simple and complex carbohydrates are converted by the liver into glucose for immediate use. If the body has too many of these carbohydrates to use immediately,

it will store about 2000 calories worth in the liver and skeletal muscles in the form of glycogen. Any excess sugar that is consumed is stored as fat.

Our modern diet is packed full of simple carbs and lacking in complex. This is leading to the rise in obesity, diabetes, heart disease, kidney problems, cancer and is strongly linked to the rise in auto immune diseases. We simply consume too much processed grain and low-fat dairy.

If you are looking to lose weight, clear brain fog, or are struggling with depression or anxiety, take a look at the quality of carbohydrates in your diet. Replacing junk carbs with healthy, high fiber ones will ensure you get the fuel your body needs for healthy brain function and improved digestion. You will find that complex carbohydrates will have a positive influence on your mood, memory and speed of recall.

Remember that carbs are a macronutrient, if you are not eating adequate amounts and your stores are low, the body will in turn begin to burn protein for energy which will take away from normal body function and repair. It is also hard on the kidneys, leading to the passage of painful stones and protein by-products in the urine.

Fill your diet with legumes, vegetables and dark berries to give your body the high quality carbs it craves. If you have digestive issues avoid all grains and processed milk products. (cream products; butter, cream, full fat plain Greek yogurt, are good (for most). Organic and raw are even better.)

Tara Pierce is a Master Herbalist graduate of the School of Natural Healing. She offers private health consultations and teaches nutrition classes to homeschoolers and truth seekers of all ages.