



CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are our main source of energy. They feed our brain and nervous system, keep our digestive system in shape, and when not consumed in excess, help keep our body lean.

Carbohydrates behave differently in the digestive system depending upon how refined they are. Simple carbohydrates such as sugar and flour are absorbed and converted to energy very quickly. Complex carbohydrates such as whole grains and legumes take longer to digest and are absorbed by the body and provide energy at a slower, more sustained rate. Complex carbohydrates are much healthier for the body than simple carbohydrates, though the right simple carbohydrates – such as those in fruit – are not unhealthy because they also contain essential vitamins and fiber. Fiber is especially important because it promotes normal blood cholesterol concentration, modulates blood glucose concentration, maintains healthy bowel function, and helps to maintain a healthy body weight.

Good Carbs:

- Fruit – There is no unhealthy fruit. Dried fruit is also very healthy and has actually been shown to have a higher concentration of nutrients, vitamins and minerals than its fresh counterparts.
- Vegetables – as with fruit, there are no bad vegetables (except for maybe potatoes which are very starchy but do contain some vitamins).
- Whole grains – a whole grain is made up of the entire grain seed of a plant. The seed is made up of the bran, germ and endosperm. In many ancient cultures, whole grains were a staple of the diet: rice in Asia; whole wheat and kasha in Europe; quinoa and chia (Salba) in the Americas. Quinoa, millet, spelt/farro, kamut, couscous, amaranth, millet, brown rice, oatmeal, barley, organic corn are all healthy whole grains.
- Natural, unrefined sugars such as maple syrup, honey, date sugar, brown rice syrup, barley malt and Rapadura in small quantities for baking, dressings or recipes that call for sweetening.

Bad Carbs:

- White and refined sugars, High Fructose Corn Syrup – labeling may say glucose, sucrose, fructose, dextrose, etc.
- The carbohydrates in refined wheat products are also very unhealthy. When a grain is refined most of the bran and some of the germ is removed, which causes a loss in fiber, B vitamins, vitamin E, minerals and unsaturated fats. Removing the fiber makes the carbohydrates in wheat starch easier and faster for the body to absorb. The body creates too much insulin, the blood sugar drops and you feel hungry again.
- Processed foods because these food products are full of preservatives, and while they have a long shelf life they provide no nutrients, vitamins or minerals. Often made from genetically modified corn and soy, these highly processed carbohydrate-based foods may act as “anti-nutrients” in our bodies.