

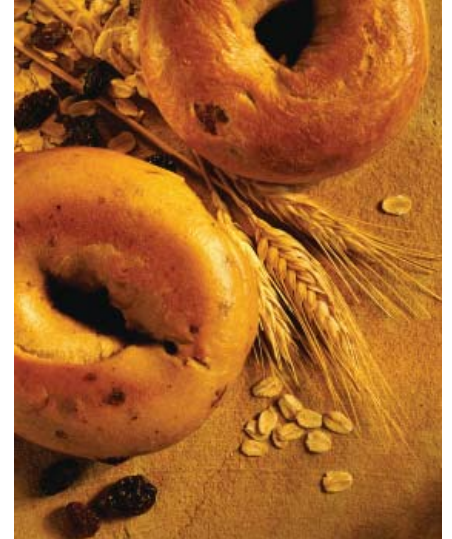
Carbohydrates

The good, the bad, and the not to be eaten too often

If you have been keeping up with the latest nutrition news, you know that the Atkins diet is out, and so is seriously restricting your carbohydrate intake. The reason for this is people have re-discovered that carbohydrates is the preferred fuel for both body and mind. We know carbohydrates are not all good or all bad. Some kinds promote health while others, when eaten often and in large quantities, actually increase the risk for diabetes and coronary heart disease.

What are Carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates come from a wide array of foods - bread, beans, milk, popcorn, potatoes, cookies, spaghetti, corn, and cherry pie. They also come in a variety of forms. The most common and abundant are sugars, fibers, and starches. The basic building block of a carbohydrate is a sugar molecule.



Fiber: A Carbohydrate Powerhouse (the good)

Fiber occurs naturally only in foods from plants – foods such as beans, fruits, veggies, and grains. Each of these powerhouse foods is packed with fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients - things that work to keep your body healthy today and in tip-top shape tomorrow. In addition, these fruits, veggies and whole grain foods are low in fat and calories. These nutrient-dense, low calorie foods should be about 2/3 of what you put on your plate at each meal. (The other third should be a protein food.) You need to be careful how you prepare these foods. For example, when you cook them in butter, or cover them with cheeses, you add lots of calories to them. And if you juice fruits or veggies, they lose their fiber, although they retain the vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients.

What's so whole about whole grains? (more of the good)

Whole grains are the best choice for grain foods, because they contain the whole wheat berry, which provides more naturally occurring fiber, vitamins and minerals. That means it is better to look for bread, cereal and pasta, brown rice or even popcorn that says “whole grain” or “whole wheat, oats or rice” as the first ingredient listed on the package. More information may be found by visiting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The Guidelines recommend we make half of all our grain choices whole grain. For most of us, then, that means at least three one ounce servings of whole grain foods is a daily goal. That could be two ounces of whole wheat cereal and one piece of whole wheat bread, for example. How are you doing with your whole grain consumption? Page down to Get More Whole Grains below or see what My Pyramid says at <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/grains.html>

What's the story on sugar? (The bad and the not to be eaten too often)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) surveys show that sugar consumption has increased in the United States almost every year since 1982. Most of that sugar consumption came from cane and beet sugar, and corn syrup and corn sugar. Much of the increase was due to the consumption of sweetened soft drinks.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans say that since sugars contribute calories with few, if any, nutrients, one should look for foods and beverages, which are low in added sugars. Read the ingredient list and make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few ingredients. Some names for added sugars (caloric sweeteners) include sucrose, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, maple syrup, and fructose. When we consume products with added sugar, we are simply getting a sweet taste and empty added calories. It might be time to think about limiting the high calorie, low nutrient content foods such as soda pop and other sweetened beverages, along with, candy, desserts, or cookies. Instead, try loading up with these good carbs:

- **Focus on fruits.** Eat a variety of fruits—whether fresh, frozen, canned, or dried—rather than fruit juice for most of your fruit choices. For a 2,000-calorie diet, you will need 2 cups of fruit each day (for example, 1 small banana, 1 large orange, and 1/4 cup of dried apricots or peaches).
- **Vary your veggies.** Eat more dark green veggies, such as broccoli, kale, and other dark leafy greens; orange veggies, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and winter squash; and beans and peas, such as pinto beans, kidney beans, black beans, garbanzo beans, split peas, and lentils.
- **Make half your grains whole.** Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta every day. One ounce is about 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta. Look to see that grains such as wheat, rice, oats, or corn are referred to as “whole” in the list of ingredients.



Get More Whole Grains!

Here are some great ways to get more whole grains:

- **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.
- **Bag the potatoes.** Instead, try brown rice or even “newer” 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.