

# MHealthy Nutrition: CARBOHYDRATES



Carbohydrates have been blamed for weight gain and are sometimes avoided if they contain gluten. Here, we have laid out the facts on how to make healthier carbohydrate choices to fuel your body and mind and keep you healthy.

## SMARTER CARBOHYDRATE CHOICES

- Whole grain breads, cereals, and crackers; whole wheat pasta, brown rice, quinoa
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Dried beans and peas

## KEY BENEFITS OF SMART CARBOHYDRATE CHOICES

- Source of vitamins, minerals, & phytonutrients
- Naturally lower in fat and calories
- Provides fiber which...
  - » Is filling
  - » May help regulate blood sugar
  - » May help lower cholesterol

## WHAT ABOUT ADDED SUGARS?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans state that since sugars contribute calories with few nutrients, look for foods and beverages which are low in added sugars.

When we consume products with added sugar, we are simply getting a sweet taste and empty added calories. It is time to think about limiting the high calorie, low nutrient content foods such as soda pop and other sweetened beverages, along with candy, desserts, cookies, ice cream and some snack foods.

## READ THE INGREDIENT LIST

Make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few ingredients. Common names for added sugar include:

- Sugar
- Sucrose
- Glucose
- Corn syrup
- Honey
- Maple syrup
- High fructose corn syrup
- Fructose
- Corn Sweetener
- Molasses
- Evaporated cane juice
- Cane crystals

### NUTRITIOUS CARBOHYDRATES ARE WHERE TO GET MORE ENERGY!

**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 2000 calorie diet, you will need 2 cups of fruit each day (for example, 2 cups would be equal to 1 small banana, 1 large orange, AND 1/4 cup of dried apricots or peaches)

**Vary your veggies** - Eat dark green veggies, such as broccoli, kale, and other dark leafy greens. Choose red and orange veggies, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, pumpkin, and winter squash. Try beans and peas, such as pinto beans, kidney beans, black beans, garbanzo beans, split peas, and lentils.

**Make half your grains whole every day** - Including whole grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta. Look for a whole grain as the first ingredient such as whole wheat flour, oats or brown rice.

### HOW MANY CARBOHYDRATES ARE TOO MUCH?

The Choose My Plate website is a great resource to help you find out how much food from each food group you need for good health and a healthy weight. The site is filled with nutrition information.

Here's what to do:

1. Go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)
2. At the top, under the "Resources" menu, click on, "MyPlate Plan."
3. On this page click on, "Start."
4. Fill in your age, sex, height, weight and activity level and click on, "Calculate Food Plan."
5. Click on the blue calorie level given.
6. The MyPlate Plan will provide recommendations for how much food to eat from each food group as well as a checklist to keep track of how much you are actually eating from each food group.