

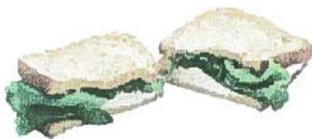
Carbohydrates are the most important source of energy for your body. Your digestive system changes carbohydrates into glucose (blood sugar). Your body uses this sugar for energy for your cells, tissues and organs. It stores sugar in your liver and muscles for when it is needed and stores extra sugars in fat cells.



Carbohydrates are called simple or complex, depending on their chemical structure and ease of digestion to sugar (glucose). **Simple** carbohydrates include sugars found naturally in foods such as fruits, vegetables, milk, and milk products. They also include sugars added during food processing and refining. **Complex** carbohydrates include whole grain breads and cereals, starchy vegetables and legumes. Many of the complex carbohydrates are good sources of fiber, vitamins and minerals.

Simple carbs are more quickly digested and absorbed than complex ones, so simple carbs can raise your blood glucose levels faster and higher (high glycemic). This is often followed by a “crash and burn” leaving you hungry and craving something sweet. To lower your risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity, minimize simple carbohydrates in your diet.

Choose complex carbs and enjoy them with a protein or healthy fat for an optimal meal.



A whole wheat sandwich with turkey, spinach and avocado is a great example.

Tips to make healthy carbohydrates work in a balanced diet:

Look for ways to add whole grains, aiming to have at least half of the grain foods you eat to be whole grain.

- ✓ Try ready-to-eat or ready-to-cook whole-grain cereal for breakfast.
- ✓ Choose whole-grain breads, tortillas, bagels, pita pockets or rolls (the word “whole” needs to be first on the list of ingredients).
- ✓ Eat air-popped popcorn for a snack.
- ✓ Add whole grains to mixed dishes: try adding wild rice to soups or casseroles.
- ✓ Add oats to cookies.
- ✓ Use oats in place of bread crumbs in meatloaf.
- ✓ Substitute one-quarter to one-half of the white flour with whole-grain flour in recipes.
- ✓ Enjoy whole wheat pasta, or try the new “tan” pastas made with added legume flour.

Grab fruits and veggies!

- ✓ Enjoy a rainbow of fruits and vegetables for a variety of vitamins and minerals. Grab a whole piece of fruit instead of the fruit juice.
- ✓ Eat dried beans and peas often. They are rich in fiber and offer protein, vitamins, and minerals. Try flavoring them with herbs, spices, onions, garlic, and vegetables.



Limit the following:

- sugary foods
- foods made with processed white flours (crackers, muffins, candy)
- added sugars – check the label for: cane sugar, maple syrup, corn syrup, honey, molasses, brown rice syrup, maltodextrin, fructose, sucrose, evaporated cane juice, fruit juice concentrates