

# FitFacts®

## Carbohydrates

CARBOHYDRATES (CARBS) ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF A HEALTHY DIET. NOT ONLY DO CARBS GIVE US THE ENERGY THAT WE NEED TO LIVE, BUT THEY ALSO IMPROVE DIGESTION, PROMOTE HEART HEALTH, AND LOWER OUR RISK FOR CERTAIN CANCERS. WHAT IS CONFUSING ABOUT CARBS, THOUGH, IS THAT THERE ARE ALSO CERTAIN TYPES THAT MAKE US GAIN WEIGHT AND RAISE OUR RISK FOR DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE. HERE ARE SOME BASIC WAYS TO BE HEALTHY WHEN IT COMES TO CARBS:



### 1. Know the difference between “good” and “bad” carbs.

- **“Good carbs”** are high in fiber, which slows digestion. This helps you feel full longer, keeps your blood sugar stable, and gives you energy for a longer amount of time. Plant-based foods are full of good carbs and fiber.
- **“Bad carbs”** are found in processed and refined foods. During processing, these foods are stripped of fiber and other nutrients for improved texture and longer shelf-life. As a result, these foods are rapidly digested, which makes your blood sugar go up and down quickly. This leaves you feeling hungry and low on energy soon after a meal. Common bad carbs include the “white” foods- white rice, white pasta, and white bread.

### 2. Look for good carbs in fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains.

Whole grain foods include brown and wild rice, oatmeal, buckwheat, bulgur, millet, rolled oats, whole grain barley, quinoa, whole rye, and whole wheat. A food that is truly whole grain lists the word “whole” before the name of the grain and is the first or second ingredient.

### 3. Spot bad carbs on the ingredient list.

Refined grains are disguised by the names “enriched flour,” “wheat flour,” “stoned wheat,” “cracked wheat,” “100% wheat,” and “multi-grain.” Also stay away from foods with added sugars that are listed as high fructose corn syrup, white or brown sugar, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, molasses, honey, maple syrup, malt syrup, pancake syrup, fructose sweetener, liquid fructose, anhydrous dextrose, and crystal dextrose.

### 4. Read nutrition labels

to learn how many grams of fiber and carbohydrate are in the foods that you eat. Adults should get 25-35 grams of fiber per day. When you choose foods that are high in fiber, you are getting good carbs at the same time.

### 5. Calculate your daily carb recommendation.

Even if you only choose good carbs, you can still gain weight if you eat too many of them. Carbohydrates

should make up 45-65% of your daily calories (even if you are trying to lose weight). You can calculate your daily carb recommendation in grams by plugging in your daily calorie goal into the following formula: (we are using 1800 calories per day as an example)

45% of daily calories from carbohydrate:

$$1800^* \text{ calories} \times 0.45 = 810 \text{ calories}$$

$$810 \text{ calories divided by } 4 \text{ (there are 4 calories per gram of carb)} = 202 \text{ grams}$$

65% of daily calories from carbohydrate:

$$1800^* \text{ calories} \times 0.65 = 1170 \text{ calories}$$

$$1170 \text{ calories divided by } 4 \text{ grams/calorie} = 293 \text{ grams}$$

A person with a daily calorie goal of 1800 should have between 202-293 grams of carbohydrate per day.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

[U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)