



A Simple guide to:

## CARBOHYDRATES

Like proteins and fats, carbohydrates are one of the three main nutrients in food.

Carbohydrates (carbs) are the body's major source of energy. There are two main types of carbohydrates —**sugars** (like the kinds in milk, fruit, table sugar, and candy) and **starches**, which are found in grains, breads, crackers, and pasta.

The body breaks down carbs into the sugar **glucose**, which the body's cells need. Glucose is absorbed into the bloodstream, which makes the sugar level in the blood go up. As the sugar level rises in the body, the pancreas releases a hormone called **insulin**. Insulin is needed to move glucose from the blood into the cells, where it can be used as a source of energy.

You've probably seen ads for low-carb foods and diets, but children and adults need **carbohydrates**. Most foods contain carbohydrates, which the body breaks down into simple sugars — the major source of energy for the body.



### What Are Carbohydrates?

There are two major types of carbohydrates (or carbs) in foods: simple and complex.

**Simple carbohydrates:** These are also called simple sugars. They're found in refined sugars, like the white sugar you see in a sugar bowl. If you have a lollipop, you're eating simple carbs. But you'll also find simple sugars in more nutritious foods, such as fruit and milk. It's healthier to get your simple sugars from foods like these. Why? Because sugar isn't added to them and

they also contain vitamins, fibre, and important nutrients like calcium. A lollipop has lots of added sugar and doesn't contain important nutrients.

**Complex carbohydrates:** These are also called starches. Starches include grain products, such as bread, crackers, pasta, and rice. As with simple sugars, some complex carbohydrate foods are better choices than others. Refined grains, such as white flour and white rice, have been processed, which removes nutrients and fibre. But unrefined grains still contain these vitamins and minerals. They are also rich in fibre, which helps your digestive system work well. Fibre helps you feel full, so you're less likely to overeat. A bowl of oatmeal fills you up better than sugary candy with the same amount of calories

### **How Does the Body Use Carbs?**

When you eat carbs, your body breaks them down into simple sugars, which are absorbed into the bloodstream. As the sugar level rises in your body, the pancreas releases a hormone called insulin. Insulin is needed to move sugar from the blood into the cells, where the sugar can be used as an energy source

When this process goes fast — as with simple sugars — you're more likely to feel hungry again soon. When it goes more slowly, as with a whole-grain food, you'll be satisfied longer. These types of complex carbs give you energy over a longer period of time.

The carbs in some foods (mostly those with a lot of simple sugars) make the blood sugar level rise more quickly than others. Scientists have been studying whether eating foods that cause big jumps in blood sugar may be related to health problems like diabetes and heart disease.

You're probably already on the right track if you're limiting simple sugars (such as candy) and eating more complex carbs (like vegetables, oatmeal, and whole-grain wheat bread)

### **Conclusion**

Your body needs carbohydrates and therefore you need to ensure you consume a decent amount, but be aware that there are better options. Too much sugar intake will make you fat if you do not work it off. Like all advice that HMHB gives – this is your responsibility and your choice. But you will be healthier and fitter if you think more about your nutrition intake, and how your body works, along with its needs. Give yourself the best chance of a longer healthier life.

