

Adding good carbs to your diet

by Stephanie Pradun, RD, LDN, TRIO Registered Dietitian

Carbohydrates, or carbs, are any naturally-occurring sugars, starches, and fiber in food. They are broken down and digested to become glucose, which provides energy for all the body's functions. While they provide an essential function, not all carbs offer the same health benefit. Fruit and whole grains are sources of carbohydrate, but so are soda and candy. It's important to focus on the foods offering the most health benefit while limiting treats.

Anatomy of a grain

Whole grains contain three parts: the bran, the germ and the endosperm. The bran and germ contain essential vitamins, minerals and fiber, which can help reduce the risk for heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. White or refined grains contain only the endosperm, making them lower in nutrients than whole grain products.

In addition to whole wheat products, barley, quinoa, oats and brown rice are other sources of whole grains. You should also look for the words "whole grain" on a food label and choose products high in fiber with fewer added sugars. While they sound appealing, foods labeled multi-grain, stone-ground, cracked wheat, etc, are not usually whole-grain

Good carbs and bad carbs

The diet industry and their promoters have popularized the terms "good carbs" and "bad carbs" to help sell different diet plans. Dividing carbohydrates into good carbs and bad carbs is an easy way to think about good nutrition, but these are not exact, scientific terms. When planning a healthy diet, eat whole grain, high fiber foods rather than enriched, low fiber foods.

Sources: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/15416-carbohydrates#:~:text=Good%20carbs%20take%20longer%20to,mainly%20white%20flour%20and%20sugar.>

<https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/healthy-eating/what-is-a-whole-grain>

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