

# OUR BODY AND CARBS



## What Are Carbs?

### CARBS PROVIDE YOUR BODY WITH ENERGY

The main purpose of carbohydrates in the diet is to provide energy. Most carbs get broken down or transformed into glucose, which can be used as energy. Carbs can also be turned into fat (stored energy) for later use.

Fiber is an exception. It does not provide energy directly, but it does feed the friendly bacteria in the digestive system. These bacteria can use the fiber to produce fatty acids that some of our cells can use as energy. Humans cannot digest fiber, although the bacteria in the digestive system can make use of some of them



## "Whole" vs "Refined" Carbs

### NOT ALL CARBS ARE CREATED EQUAL.

There are many different types of carbohydrate-containing foods, and they vary greatly in their health effects.

### Whole Carbs

Whole carbs are unprocessed and contain the fiber found naturally in the food, while refined carbs have been processed and had the natural fiber stripped out. These foods are generally healthy.

Examples of whole carbs:

- vegetables
- whole fruit
- legumes
- potatoes
- whole grains

### Refined Carbs

Refined carbohydrate foods are usually also lacking in essential nutrients. In other words, they are "empty" calories. They tend to cause major spikes in blood sugar levels, which leads to a subsequent crash that can trigger hunger and cravings for more high-carb foods.

Examples of refined carbs:

- sugar-sweetened beverages
- fruit juices
- pastries
- white bread
- white pasta
- white rice

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## Low Carb Diets

### ARE THEY RIGHT FOR EVERYONE?

These types of diets restrict carbohydrates, while allowing plenty of protein and fat. Studies show that low-carb diets cause more weight loss and lead to greater improvement in various health markers, including HDL (the "good") cholesterol, blood triglycerides, blood sugar, blood pressure and others.

For people who are obese, or have metabolic syndrome and/or type 2 diabetes, low-carb diets can have life-saving benefits.

However, just because low-carb diets are useful for weight loss and people with certain metabolic problems, they are definitely not the answer for everyone so contact your PCP for a diet plan that best fits you.

The "optimal" carbohydrate intake depends on numerous factors, such as age, gender, metabolic health, physical activity, food culture and personal preference.

If you have a lot of weight to lose, or have health problems like metabolic syndrome and/or type 2 diabetes, then you are probably carbohydrate sensitive. In this case, reducing carbohydrate intake can have clear, life-saving benefits



## Are Carb Essential?

### NO, BUT BENEFICIAL

Many low-carbers claim that carbs are not an essential nutrient. This is technically true. The body can function without a single gram of carbohydrate in the diet. However, just because carbs are not "essential" - that doesn't mean they can't be beneficial.

Many carb-containing foods are healthy and nutritious. These foods have all sorts of beneficial compounds and provide a variety of health benefits. Although it is possible to survive even on a zero-carb diet, it is probably not an optimal choice because you're missing out on plant foods that science has shown to be beneficial.

**MONTHLY DISCUSSION GROUP - MAY 2020**

HELD THE FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH

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