

# Strategies for Eating Carb Smart

## Carbohydrates: Good or Bad?

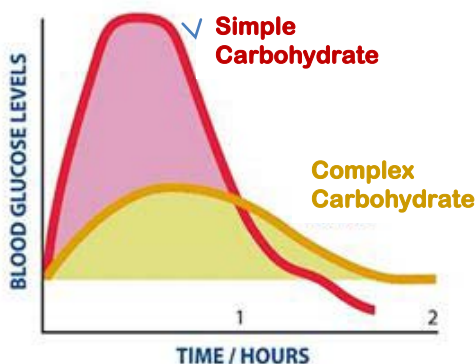
Dietary recommendations have varied widely throughout the past 20 or 30 years – fat used to be the villain, now it seems to be carbohydrates (or is gluten to blame?). There is a lot of misinformation floating around concerning the role of carbohydrates in the diet. The truth is, carbohydrates aren't all good or all bad. Some kinds promote health while others can increase risk for obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases.

## Types of Carbohydrates

*Simple Carbohydrates* like sugar, soda, chips, white flour and white rice tend to be low in nutrients and are easily broken down in the body, leading to a sharp rise in blood sugar levels. Eating too many of these foods over time can cause the body's mechanisms for managing blood sugar to tire and break down, leading to insulin resistance and type II diabetes.

*Complex Carbohydrates* are found in whole foods like whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables. These foods provide sustained energy while also delivering fiber, a carbohydrate that is indigestible and slows the absorption of sugar into the blood stream. Complex carbohydrate foods also contain many essential nutrients our bodies need to stay healthy.

**Comparing Blood Sugar Levels After Eating Simple vs. Complex Carbohydrates**



## Carb Smart Tips

**Start the day with whole grains.** If you're partial to hot cereals, try rolled or steel-cut oats. If you're a cold cereal person, look for a variety that is unsweetened and lists whole wheat, whole oats or other whole grain first on the ingredient list.

**Bag the white foods.** Instead, opt for whole-grain breads, pastas and brown rice or try a new whole grain like buckwheat, millet, or quinoa.

**Eat more vegetables (and fruit in moderation).** Start by making half your plate vegetables and incorporating fruits and vegetables as snacks. While fruits have many important nutrients, they are high in sugar and 2-3 servings per day is sufficient for most people.

**Bring on the beans.** Beans and legumes are an excellent source of slowly digested carbohydrates and plant based protein.

**Look out for added sugars.** Check the nutrient label to see how many grams of added sugar are in your food. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 25 grams a day for women and 37.5 grams for men. Use fruit to add sweetness to cereals, yogurt and baked goods.

**Don't drink your calories.** Sugars found in beverages from soda to smoothies are rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream, causing a spike in blood sugar. Water is the best beverage option.