



CARBOHYDRATES

What are carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are one of three main macronutrients required by our bodies to function effectively and found in many forms of foods and beverages. The body breaks down carbohydrates into sugar molecules called glucose, which is the main source of energy for the body's cells, tissues, and organs. Glucose can be used immediately or stored in the liver and muscles for later use.

Types of Carbohydrates?

Sugars: Are simple carbohydrates because they are in the most basic form. They can be added to foods, including sweets, desserts, processed foods, fizzy drinks and/or cordial. They also include the types of sugar that are found naturally in fruits, vegetables, and milk.

Starches: Are complex carbohydrates, which comprise of many simple sugars strung together. Your body needs to break starches down into sugars to use them for energy. Starches include breads, cereals, grains, and pasta. They also found in certain vegetables, i.e., potatoes, peas, and corn.

Fibres: Are complex carbohydrates. The body cannot break down most fibres, so eating foods with fibre can help you feel full and make you less likely to overeat. Diets high in fibre have enormous health benefits. They may help prevent stomach or intestinal problems, such as constipation and diarrhoea and can also help lower cholesterol and

blood sugar. Fibre is found in many foods that come from plants, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, and whole grains.

Sources of carbohydrates:

- Grains, breads, cereals, noodles, pasta, crackers, and rice
- Fruits, e.g., apples, bananas, berries, mangoes, melons, and oranges
- Dairy products, e.g., milk and yogurt
- Legumes, including dried beans, lentils, and peas
- Processed and snack foods, including sweets, cakes, biscuits, pastries, desserts, take-away foods, junk food
- Juices, soft drinks, fruit drinks, sports drinks, and energy drinks that contain sugar
- Starchy vegetables, e.g., potatoes, corn, and peas

What carbohydrates are healthy to eat?

- Whole grains, e.g., brown rice, wholemeal/wholewheat breads, rye, barley, oats, quinoa. They are nutrient dense and include other vitamins and minerals, plus fibre that the body needs.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Limit or avoid refined grains as this process involves the removal of nutrients that are beneficial to health, e.g., white bread, white rice.
- Limit or avoid foods that have added sugars. This will raise blood sugar levels and cause weight gain. Rather than having a fruit juice, eat a whole piece of fruit or use the whole piece in a smoothie to make it nutrient dense and fibre rich.
- Carbohydrates should make up 45-65% of the overall diet.

