



# ALL ABOUT CARBOHYDRATES

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Carbohydrates are always in the spotlight and most often portrayed in a negative light. It's a hotly-debated topic, especially when it comes to weight loss diets. The picture painted around carbohydrates is that they are "bad" and this has left many people confused about carbohydrates and their vital role for our health including maintaining a healthy weight. It is important to know that you get different types of carbohydrates and that not all carbs are created equally. It's all about the type, quality and quantity of carbs within your diet – let's take a closer look.

## 1. What are carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the sugars, starches and fibres found in fruits, vegetables, grains and milk products. Carbs are one of the three macronutrients needed for proper body functioning, the other two being proteins and fats, these are required in relatively large amounts in our diet<sup>1,2</sup>. Carbs are our body's main source of energy. They are called carbohydrates simply because they contain a carbon, hydrogen and oxygen at a chemical level<sup>1</sup>.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH); the recommended daily amount (RDA) of carbs for adults is 135 grams. The NIH however recommends that everyone should have his or her own carbohydrate goal according to individualised needs<sup>1</sup>. Carb intake for majority of people should be between 45 and 65 percent of total calories<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. The important role of carbohydrates

Carbohydrates provide energy for our central nervous system and working muscles, we need to eat carbs for vitality and productivity. They also prevent protein from being used as an energy source which helps facilitate fat metabolism<sup>1-3</sup>. Fruits, vegetables and wholegrains are rich sources of vitamins and minerals playing many important roles in our bodies. Carbohydrates also contain fibre which helps keep our digestive system healthy and decreases the risk for countless diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers<sup>4,5</sup>.

## 3. Simple vs. complex carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are classified into two groups namely simple or complex. The biggest difference between these two forms is the chemical structure and how quickly the sugar gets digested and absorbed.

### Simple Carbohydrates:

- These are your monosaccharides and disaccharides, consisting of just one or two molecules.



- Generally speaking these are digested and absorbed far quicker and easier than complex carbs. They therefore provide you with rapid energy, but you will feel hungrier quicker.
- Examples: pastries, doughnuts, cookies, cakes, sugars, candies, white (bread, pasta, rice etc.)

#### **Complex Carbohydrates:**

- These are your polysaccharides, having three or more molecules.
- These consist of long chains of sugar molecules and are digested and absorbed slower therefore keeping you fuller for longer.
- Examples: vegetables, wholegrains, beans, peas and pulses.

#### **4. All about fibre**

Fibre found in most carbohydrates is crucial for digestion and helps promote healthy bowel function. It also decreases the risk for many diseases including coronary heart disease and diabetes. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recommends a fibre intake of 25-30g/day. Fibre is mostly found in fruits, vegetables, seeds and grains.

#### **5. What should I know about Glycaemic Index (GI)**

According to the GI Foundation of South Africa (GIFSA), the Glycaemic Index (GI) is a system that ranks carbohydrate containing foods based on their physiological effect on blood glucose (blood sugar) levels<sup>6</sup>. A food that is high GI will therefore release sugar quickly into the blood stream and provide rapid energy. A food that is low GI will release sugar slower and more steadily, providing slow sustained energy for a longer period therefore keeping you fuller for longer.

#### **6. How to choose carbohydrates**

Although there is a place for all types of carbohydrates, to ensure you are making the healthiest choice we need to try avoid refined, high sugar options and instead have high fibre options. These will keep us fuller for longer and help keep our digestive system healthy. This is easy to do - instead of white options choose brown – whole-wheat is even better. We also want to choose low GI carbohydrates, these give us slow sustained energy levels and keeps us fuller for a longer period – yay, double the benefits! Look out for the low GI claim on products.

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A 50g serving of FUTURELIFE® Smart food™ mixed with low-fat milk, is a nutritionally complete and balanced meal as it provides an internationally recommended blend of energy from Carbohydrates, Proteins and Fats<sup>5</sup>. It is the first and only scientifically formulated, low GI food that is high in energy. It is formulated using a key ingredient called SmartMaize™ which is the result of a patented cooking process, which gives it a distinct profile and a “unique fingerprint.” It is also high



in dietary fibre and contains inulin, made from whole grains (which gives this product its “grainy” texture) to ensure optimal digestion and immune support.

FUTURELIFE® Smart food™ is high in protein and contains 19 amino acids. Formulated using unique FutureSoy, providing 21% of energy from protein (9g of protein per 50g serving). It is high in Omega-3 and naturally free from trans fatty acids and cholesterol.

The product contains 21 Vitamins and Minerals delivering 50% of daily requirements for all vitamins and most minerals<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, it contains functional ingredients namely fibre and inulin (great for everyday digestive health) as well as MODUCARE® (a daily immune supplement, helping to balance and strengthen the immune system, made from a patented blend of natural plant sterols and sterolins, in a clinically proven ratio of 100:1. MODUCARE® is supplied exclusively to FUTURELIFE® under license from Aspen Pharmacare). This product provides complete nutrition and is the smart choice for you and your family. To learn more visit [www.futurelife.co.za](http://www.futurelife.co.za) .

## CONCLUSION

No macronutrient has been given the bad press as much as the humble carbohydrate and most FAD diets shine the same negative light on carbs. However, without carbs the human race would probably have died out many years ago. Carbs are the staple food for many diets around the world. If you are choosing the right types and eating the correct quantity, carbohydrates are a very important part of a balanced, healthy diet.

## REFERENCES

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