

What's your Carb Type?



Following up to previous [Carbohydrate introduction](#), we have highlighted how Carbohydrates are a major macronutrient and one of your body's primary sources of energy. However, there are still constant weight loss hype that dejects consuming them. The key is finding the right carbs — not avoiding them altogether. Thus, we take it upon ourselves, Asia's Food Science Experts to help you understand the different types of Carbohydrates.

Carbohydrates, nicknamed Carbs, can be distinguished by three types: sugar, starches and fiber. Sugar and starches are your body's main fuel for energy. They're all comprised of carbon, oxygen and hydrogen, which are organized into single units. Sugars contain just one of these units thus considered as "simple" and classified as monosaccharides. Some starches that contain no more than two of these units are still considered as "simple" carbs but classified differently as disaccharides. Fibers on the other hand have many units of sugar, making them "complex" carbohydrates.

All carbohydrates must be reduced to simple sugars (monosaccharides) in the intestine before they can be absorbed into the bloodstream. Glucose, a simpler sugar is the form in which carbohydrates circulate in the bloodstream (Stanfield, 2010).

Simple vs Complex Carbs – So which is the better carb?

Don't let the word 'complex' fool you. Complex carbohydrates like starches and fibers are considered 'healthy' as they are slower-acting carbohydrates. Complex carbs have longer series of sugars that make them up, which take the body more time to break down. This type of carbohydrate raises blood sugar slowly and lasts longer. They help with satiety in which keep us from feeling hungry for a longer period of time, thus making them a beneficial option for weight control.

Fiber is particularly significant because it aids bowel regularity and helps to control cholesterol. The main sources of dietary fiber include: most fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans and whole grains. Starch is also found in some of the same foods as fiber. The difference is certain foods are considered more starchy than fibrous, such as potatoes. Other high-starch foods are: whole wheat bread, cereal, corn, oats, peas and rice.

Simple carbohydrates, on the other hand, aren't necessarily bad depending on the type of food you are getting the carbs from. For example, most fruits are excellent sources of essential vitamins and minerals necessary for good health, and naturally contain simple carbohydrates composed of basic sugars. Then again, fruits are lightyears different from other foods that fall in the 'simple' carbs category, like cakes, cookies, sugar-sweetened beverages, fruit juices, pastries, white bread, white pasta, white rice and others.

Numerous studies are showing that simple or refined carbohydrate consumption is highly linked with health problems like obesity and type 2 diabetes. They are the root to major spikes in blood sugar levels, which leads to a subsequent downhill crash that can activate hunger and cravings for more high-carb foods. This is dubbed as the "blood sugar roller coaster" experienced by many. Simple carbohydrate foods

normally lack in essential nutrients hence making them “empty” calories – consumed excessively over time without exercising to burn it off will almost definitely lead to weight gain.

You may also be interested in [Carbohydrate introduction](#), [Why we need Carbohydrates](#) and [Carbohydrates: How should we make quality choices of carbohydrates?](#)

References

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