

General Carbohydrate Education

Chances are you know someone who has diabetes whether it is a friend or family member or something you have been personally diagnosed with. According to the American Diabetes Association 29.1 million Americans or 9.3% of the US population have diabetes and this percentage increases to 25.9% of Americans over the age of 65. You are diagnosed with diabetes when your body is not able to properly regulate your blood sugar levels. People often have questions about how their diet affects their blood sugar levels, specifically how carbohydrates impact them. The information from the Diabetes Association and National Institute on Aging will help you better understand carbohydrates and how they are important to maintaining good health.

WHAT IS A CARBOHYDRATE?

Your body needs essential nutrients to function properly, these include carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals and water. These nutrients give you the energy you need to live day to day. Carbohydrates are the body's most common source of energy. After eating foods containing carbohydrates the body converts this food into a sugar called glucose or your blood sugar. The body works to keep your blood sugars at a stable level to provide you with adequate energy.



TYPES OF CARBOHYDRATES

People sometimes get confused on what foods are actually considered carbohydrates. You will find carbohydrates in starchy foods but also foods containing sugars and fibers.

- Starchy foods such as pasta, bread, corn, beans and potatoes.
- Foods with either natural sugars such as fruit or milk or foods with added sugars like candies and soft drinks.
- Fiber comes from plant foods - good sources of dietary fibers include non-starch vegetables, berries and whole grains.

Even though there are many types of carbohydrates it is important to pay attention to the total carbohydrates you are consuming. This can often be found on a nutrition label.

Nutrition Facts

Per 90 g serving (2 slices)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 170	
Fat 2.7 g	4%
Saturated 0.5 g + Trans 0 g	5%
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 200 mg	8%
Carbohydrate 36 g	13%
Fiber 6 g	24%
Sugars 3 g	
Protein 8 g	
Vitamin A 1%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 2%	Iron 16%

MYTHS AND FACTS

Myth:

Someone with diabetes should not eat any carbohydrates.

Fact:

Carbohydrates are a critical nutrient for your body to function. Instead it is more important to pay attention to where you get your carbohydrate sources in your diet. Healthy options include fruits, non-starchy vegetables and whole grains. It is also important to pay attention to the amount of carbohydrates you are eating.

Myth:

Fruit is a healthy food so I can eat as much as I want!

Fact:

Fruit contains vitamins and minerals and healthy fibers so it is a healthy food. It also contains natural sugars so you should be mindful about the amount of fruit you consume especially when managing your diabetes.

Myth:

If you have diabetes, you should only eat small amounts of starchy foods, such as bread and pasta.

Fact:

Starchy foods can be part of a healthy diet but you want to be mindful of your portion sizes. When possible choose whole grain pastas and breads.

Myth:

People with diabetes should eat special diabetic foods.

Fact:

A healthy diet for people with diabetes or without diabetes is similar. It should be a diet based on non-starchy vegetables, whole grains, fruit, healthy fats and lean proteins.

Myth:

Eating too much sugar gave me diabetes.

Fact:

Type 2 diabetes is caused by genetics and lifestyle choices so too much sugar alone does not cause diabetes. Too much sugar can contribute to being overweight which is a risk factor for diabetes.

Understanding carbohydrates can be confusing and is one of the most common questions our dietitians receive. The **Carb Corner** was created to help our blog visitors learn about the importance of carbohydrates to maintain good health!

We will continue to add to **Carb Corner** throughout the year. Carbohydrate counting, understanding serving sizes, recipes, snacks, what to eat in a restaurant and menu ideas.

the
carb
corner

LEARN MORE

Balance, HCR ManorCare's comprehensive health and wellness blog, supplies readers with healthy ideas throughout the year. The blog is designed to serve as a resource, not only for patients, residents and families, but for anyone who strives to live a healthy, "balanced" life. For more information and help in making healthy choices, go to balance.hcr-manorcare.com and sign up to receive our newsletters. If you need help making a health care decision, visit our care finder and live chat.

References:

<http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/statistics/>

<http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/what-can-i-eat/understanding-carbohydrates/>

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/whats-your-plate/protein-carbohydrates-fats>