

# CARBOHYDRATES, SHOPPING AND COOKING



## CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrate is the general term for the group of nutrients that include sugars, starches and dietary fibre. Sugars and starches can be digested but fibre is indigestible and forms what is sometimes known as 'roughage'. Carbohydrate is the macronutrient needed in the largest amount in a diet.

## CARBOHYDRATES ARE CLASSED AS EITHER SIMPLE OR COMPLEX.

Foods with high simple carbohydrates or simple sugars tend to be refined and generally contain fewer essential vitamins and minerals. They are digested quickly and provide the body with energy because they contain refined sugars which are rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream. This can cause a spike and a slump in blood sugar resulting in fluctuations of energy and may cause hunger pangs.

Complex carbohydrates, like starches, are digested more slowly. Complex carbohydrates are made up of a number of different simple carbohydrate units bound together. They are broken down during the digestive process to simple sugars. The time taken to break them down means they are digested and absorbed into the body more slowly which can result in a sustained energy release.

## WHAT DO CARBOHYDRATES DO?

Carbohydrates provide the body's main source of energy and are needed for proper functioning of the central nervous system, kidneys and the brain through their role of supplying glucose. Carbohydrates also support muscle structure.

### REQUIREMENTS

The Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) for carbohydrates is approximately 45-60% of your typical kCal intake. This translates to:

 *approx. 300g carbohydrates per day*

 *approx. 230g carbohydrates per day*

### WHAT FOODS ARE GOOD SOURCES OF CARBOHYDRATES?

Fruits and vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals, legumes and pasta are good sources of complex carbohydrates.

#### Healthy living tip

Remember that fruit contains sugars (carbohydrates). So try not to eat more than 3 pieces a day. If you're a keen fruit eater, limit other sugars in your diet during the day to make up for the fruit sugars, or increase your vegetable intake.

#### Healthy living tip

When shopping for food to create healthy meals, fresh is best. Fill your shopping trolley with fresh foods rather than long life, shelf stable foods. Choose 'whole' foods such as brightly coloured fruit and vegetables, lean cuts of meat and plenty of wholegrains, rather than 'processed' foods that are often highly refined and contain less nutrient value.

#### Healthy living tip

Grilling, baking, steaming and poaching are good healthy options and they help retain as much nutrient value in the food as possible.

