

Carb Smart With Whole Grains

Whole grains are a healthy source of carbohydrate because they are filled with fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Choose whole-grain foods that keep the grain as intact as possible (and have little or no added sugars or unhealthy fat). Following are examples of nutritious options:

Whole grains with little to no processing, such as amaranth, barley, brown rice and wild rice, buckwheat, bulgur, millet, farro, whole rye, quinoa, sorghum, triticale, whole oats, or whole wheat; 100% whole-wheat (or other whole-grain) breads, bagels, rolls, English muffins, pitas, or tortillas; hot whole-grain cereals such as steel-cut oatmeal and kasha; whole-grain ready-to-eat cereals such as shredded wheat or oat squares; 100% whole-wheat spaghetti or pasta; whole-grain crackers;** whole-grain pancakes or waffles (without syrup)*

Refined grains are not the best source of carbohydrate because the refining process breaks down the intact grain and strips away many beneficial nutrients. Refined grains are digested and absorbed very quickly, which can cause sugar levels in the blood to spike. In response, the body quickly takes up sugar from the blood and puts it into storage (in muscle, fat, and the liver) to bring sugar levels down to normal. Working so quickly may cause the body to overshoot things, however, making blood sugar levels lower than they should be; this can cause feelings of false hunger (even after a big meal), as well as tiredness. Foods made with refined grains, which should be eaten rarely, if ever, include the following:

Processed, refined grains, such as white rice; breads, bagels, buns, rolls, English muffins, pitas, or tortillas made from white flour (these do not include 100% whole wheat or other whole grains); hot cereals such as instant oatmeal and grits or farina (semolina); most ready-to-eat breakfast cereals and cereal bars (these are usually full of added sugar as well); spaghetti, macaroni, and other pastas and noodles; crackers and pretzels; pancakes, waffles, muffins and other pastries, doughnuts, cookies, cakes, and pies

*Make sure that sugar is not one of the first three ingredients, and be on the lookout for different types of sugar throughout the ingredients list.

**Make sure to choose products that contain no trans fat and are low in saturated fat; for more information on choosing foods with healthy fat, see lessons 5 and 6.