

Benefits of eating carbohydrates

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Ah, carbohydrates, though often touted by the media as an enemy in the game of weight loss, they are an essential macronutrient as our body's main source of fuel and a necessary component to maintaining proper cellular function.

When eaten strategically in amount and type, carbohydrates can serve as a key player in not only losing weight but maintaining [weight loss](#). The University of Alabama's Sheena Quizon Gregg shares how to do just that.

— Most often people think of starchy foods as the main source of [carbohydrate](#), but fruit and certain dairy products can also serve as significant carbohydrate sources. It is important to recognize that there are three types of carbohydrate:

- Starches (also known as [complex carbohydrates](#))
- Sugars
- Fiber

— According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, starches are found naturally in foods such as bread, cereal, rice, crackers, pasta, potatoes, peas, corn and beans. Sugars are found naturally in foods including fruits and milk and are also concentrated in processed foods such as candy, cake and soda. Fiber is the roughage in plant foods and helps keep the digestive tract healthy. Soluble fiber, found in foods, including oatmeal and fruit, can help maintain a healthy cholesterol level.

— Regular intake of healthy carbohydrates such as whole grains, fruits, and [dairy products](#) can help fuel exercise sessions, maintain healthy blood sugar, fuel your brain to function at its highest level of efficiency and give your body energy to burn fat for weight loss. When too little carbohydrate is eaten in a [low carbohydrate diet](#), rapid weight loss is often a result of the body breaking down protein in muscle tissue and, consequently, water weight is the main component of dramatic drops on the scale.

— Though carbohydrates containing [food](#) groups boast a host of vitamins and minerals needed by the body, eating any food group in excess can result in weight gain. Consulting with your physician or registered dietitian can help you determine the amount of carbohydrate best for your health goals and existing health conditions.

Provided by University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa

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