

# Good carbs for optimal health

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Do you push away the breadbasket or opt out of any meal that includes macaroni? If so, chances are you are one of the millions of people watching your carbs, or carbohydrates.

Dr. Christine Nguyen, a Mayo Clinic family physician, says not all carbs

are bad, and there are plenty of foods with good carbs. Fiber-rich foods like [whole grains](#), fruits and vegetables are essential for health, aiding digestion, lowering [cholesterol levels](#) and reducing disease risk.

When it comes to food choices, there can be plenty to pick from. Dr. Nguyen hopes you'll choose carefully.

"Ideally, we'll pick things that are whole grains rather than refined carbs, or those white-colored carbohydrates," she says.

Carbohydrates are a source of energy, but not all carbs are the same.

Simple carbs, found in highly processed sugary snacks for instance, are considered "bad" carbs because they can lead to rapid spikes in [blood sugar](#) and provide empty calories. Complex carbs, found naturally in grains, fruits and vegetables, are considered "good" carbs and are vital to a healthy diet.

"Whole grains are important because they pack vitamins and minerals that we might not get from other places. They can make up the bulk of our meal to make them filling and nutritious," says Dr. Nguyen.

Consider swapping healthy or good carbs in the place of refined or bad carbs. Try fiber-rich foods, such as quinoa; vegetables, like broccoli, carrots and [sweet potatoes](#); and fresh fruits, like apples and blackberries.

Fiber is beneficial not only for our gut health but also in order to improve our cholesterol levels, reduce our risk of cardiovascular disease, improve anti-inflammatory properties and boost the [immune system](#)," Dr. Nguyen says

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