

CONFUSED ABOUT CARBS?

Do you know how to choose healthy carbohydrates? If you are like many others, you aren't sure what a carb is or whether you should be eating them or not. Read on to separate the fact from the fiction.

Fact or Fiction: Starch, fibre and sugar are all carbohydrates.

FACT! Carbohydrates are the sugars, starches and fibre found in fruits, grains, vegetables and milk products. Sugar is the simplest form of carbohydrate and occurs naturally in fruit, milk and some vegetables. Sugar is also added to many prepackaged foods and juices. Starch and fibre are also carbohydrates, but they are made from many sugar molecules bound together. Starch is mainly found in starchy vegetables such as potatoes and grains. Bread, rice and pasta all have starch. Fibre is mostly found in whole fruits, non-starchy vegetables and whole grains.

Fact or Fiction: Our bodies need some carbohydrate everyday.

FACT! Our digestive system changes carbohydrates into glucose, which is a type of sugar that our bodies use for energy. Our cells, tissues and organs need the sugar from carbohydrates every day in order to function properly.

Fact or Fiction: Carbohydrates can be found in fruits, vegetables, milk, nuts, grains, seeds and legumes.

FACT! Naturally occurring carbohydrates can be found in all those foods. Don't shy away from healthy foods because they may contain carbohydrates. In addition to carbohydrates, these foods contain fibre, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients.

Fact or Fiction: Some sources of carbohydrate are healthier than others.

FACT! Processed foods such as white bread and fruit juice are less healthy than whole grain and unprocessed foods. Whole foods are better choices. They still have all of the nutrients and fibre intact.

Here are some tips to help you make healthier choices:

- Breakfast cereals often contain added sugar, opt for oatmeal with fruit or whole grain toast and nut butter instead
- Read the ingredients list when choosing bread. Look for 100 per cent whole grain as the first ingredient.
- Eat whole fruits instead of drinking juice
- Aim for fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables without added sugar
- Choose plain yogurt and top with fresh or frozen fruit for sweetness
- Try to have at least one fruit or vegetable with every meal or snack

If you have questions about nutrition or healthy eating you can call HealthLink BC at 811 and speak to a Registered Dietitian.

AUTHOR : JOANNE LEESING IS A REGISTERED DIETITIAN WITH INTERIOR HEALTH