

CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates, often referred to as carbs or starches, are the main source of energy for your body. Understanding what carbohydrates are, how your body uses them, and how many you need is important in your quest for good health. Carbohydrates are made up of clumps of sugars, which your digestive system breaks down to simple sugar called glucose. Your body converts these sugars rather quickly and when it does it abnormally, can affect your health. If your glucose levels drop too low, this is called Hypoglycemia. If your glucose levels stay too high, this is called Diabetes.

Glucose provides energy to the cells of your body. There are two types of carbohydrates in your body, simple and complex. Simple carbs are found in sugar, honey, candy, deserts, sweetened drinks, fruits, and milk. Complex carbs are found in starches like bread, crackers, pasta, rice, corn, and potatoes. It takes your body longer to break down the complex carbs and does not affect your body's blood sugar as quickly. If you take in more carbohydrates than your body needs, instead of wasting them, your body will turn them into stored energy. The body stores this energy as fat and is what makes a person overweight. Someone that is overweight really has too much stored energy. That is why eating less and exercising more is the best way to lose weight.

Taking in fewer calories from carbohydrates is what we call carb counting. Carb counting is a useful way to help you lose weight if you are overweight, or lower your glucose level if you are a diabetic. Knowing how many carbohydrates your body needs is important in maintaining your health. The first thing you need to know is how many calories your body needs to survive. Then you can increase or decrease this amount depending on what you are trying to accomplish. Most people want to lose weight or lower their blood sugar, so they will need to take in fewer carbohydrates than needed. Talk with your doctor about how many calories your body needs to survive. An average adult person with average activity usually requires about 2000 calories per day. Your body should get about half of it's calories from carbohydrates. So about 1000 calories should come from carbohydrates each day. When reading food labels, carbohydrates are usually labeled as how many grams it contains. There is about 4 calories in a gram of carbohydrate. Therefore, you would need to limit your daily intake of carbohydrates to 250 grams. Try to spread you intake over the course of the day. Do not take in all 250 grams at once. There are many "carb counter booklets" to help assist you in figuring out the content of most foods. Good luck in your carb counting.