

Carbohydrates get a bad rap

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“Carbs make you fat”.

“Carbs are unhealthy”. “Too much carbs raise your blood sugar”. Carbs get a bad rap and oftentimes unfairly so. What’s the evidence behind these claims?

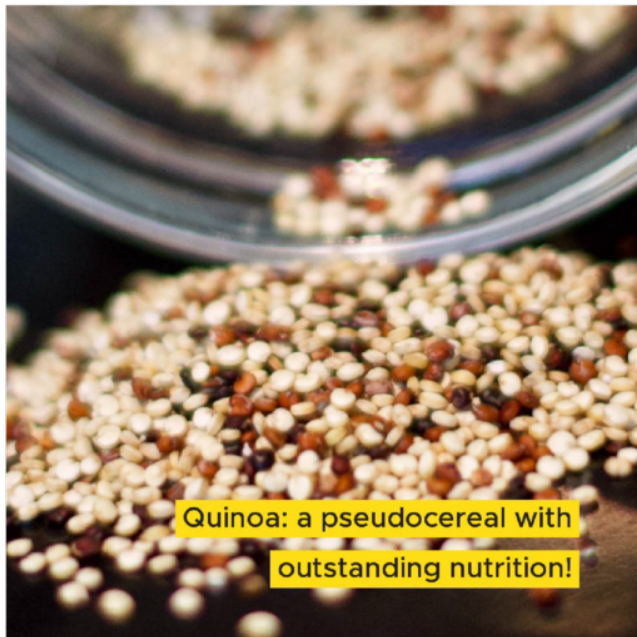
At 4 calories per gram, carbohydrates are a key source of

energy for bodies, and the preferred fuel for our brains. Carbohydrates are typically compounds containing carbon, hydrogen and oxygen in a 1:2:1 ratio, typically categorised as simple carbohydrates (short chains of sugar molecules found in table sugar, honey, fruits) or complex carbohydrates (longer chains of sugar molecules found in vegetables, whole grains).

To investigate the claims above, we need to first establish that the quality of the carbohydrate matters more than the quantity. Carbohydrates contribute directly to increased blood sugar levels which is causally related to obesity, cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes. Refined grains and sugar-sweetened products are easier for our bodies to process and have a direct impact on increased risk. On the other hand, whole grains, legumes and starchy vegetables contain complex carbohydrates which are harder to break down (because of their chain length, the surrounding structure around the carbohydrate) carry reduced risks. The main difference is explained by the glycemic index and glycemic load of these foods; the lower the numbers, the lower the blood sugar level increases.

Then there are 'good' carbohydrates like fiber. A plant-based carbohydrate that is not processed by human enzymes, fiber is essential for good microbial health in the gut. Fibers pass through our digestive system quickly since they can't be absorbed, and in turn signal to the brain that we are full, help us stay sated longer.

While there is no recommended minimum requirement, we do not need to unduly starve our bodies of carbohydrates. If you do not have pre-existing medical conditions, here are some great carbohydrates to include in your diet.



Quinoa: a pseudocereal with
outstanding nutrition!



Potato: a guilty love affair!

Quinoa: a pseudocereal with outstanding nutrition!

Grains are often thought of as the primary contributor to weight gain, and the first to go in low-carb/keto diets. However, not all grains are alike. Refined grains have the germ and bran separated from the starchy endosperm, making it easier to use or cook with but actually leading to higher risks of type II diabetes. On the other hand, whole grains like quinoa have a low glycemic load, leading to inverse correlations with chronic obesity, and cardiovascular diseases. On top of that, it is rich in many other nutrients across proteins, minerals (like manganese and copper), substantial amounts of fiber and omega-3 fatty acids.

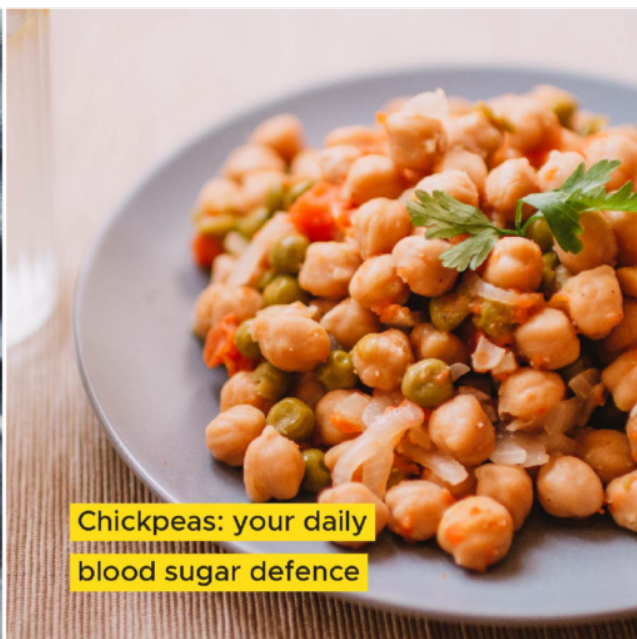
Potato: A guilty love affair!

Why do we love to hate potatoes, even as we love to eat them? Yes, its a starchy fellow but it is also full of goodness. 1 cup baked contains 36g of carbohydrates, and a dazzling array of potassium, copper, fiber (mainly in its skin). Most notably, potatoes are rich in vitamin B6 which is involved in hundreds of enzymatic reactions all over the body, from creating amino acids and red blood cells to keeping the nervous system going. When cooked and left to cool, some of

the starches turn into resistant starch which conversely help with glycemic control.



Blueberries: sweet treats that actually help lower diabetes



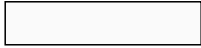
Chickpeas: your daily blood sugar defence

Blueberries: sweet treats that actually help lower diabetes

While we might associate sugar-rich fruits as high carb foods, they also offer plenty of vitamins, minerals and fiber that are essential for an all-round diet. The good news is that while they might appear to have high sugar content, fruits typically have low-to-moderate glycemic loads. Curiously, fruits like blueberries have shown increasing evidence in improving insulin sensitivity and improved blood sugar levels. Blueberries have a unique combination of phenolic compounds that bring amazing antioxidant and anti-cancer properties.

Chickpeas: your daily blood sugar defence

Part of the legume family, chickpeas contain a high amount of carbohydrates at first glance: 1 cup cooked chickpeas contain about 40g of carbohydrates, along with 15g of protein and 12g of fibres. The latter two are essential in improving our digestive process and regulating the release of sugar from food. Studies have shown improved blood sugar levels in participants after just one week of regular consumption!



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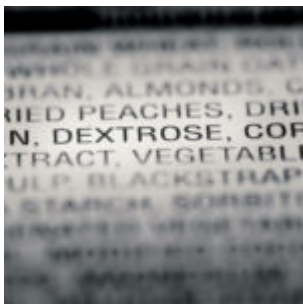


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