



The Scoop on Carbohydrates

There's a lot in the news lately about carbohydrates in the food we eat. Are they good for you? How do they relate to the rising rates of obesity in adults and children?

Carbohydrates are the sugars and starches in some foods. They are important because they give the body the energy it needs to function. Sweet tasting and processed foods, like cookies, cake, soda, fruit drinks, candy, white bread, white rice, white pasta, and even potatoes contain carbohydrates that the body digests quickly and easily. Other foods, like whole grain bread, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, dry beans, oatmeal, and fruit have carbohydrates that the body digests more slowly.

What's the problem?

When we eat carbohydrates, the body turns them into a fuel, called glucose, to give the power needed to walk, talk, think, blink, breathe, and more. Have you ever felt hungry and tired before mealtime? That's because your body is running out of glucose.

Too much of a good thing

There are problems when the body makes too much glucose. Extra glucose is saved in the liver and muscles as fat. If the body is very active, that fat is used for extra energy. Fat that isn't used continues to be saved and that can lead to obesity.

What can you do?

Remember, the body needs some carbohydrates to function. If you take all of them away, you won't have the energy needed to get through each day. The best carbohydrates are the ones that are digested slowly in the body. They aren't broken down into glucose quickly, so the body has more of a chance to use the glucose before it is turned into fat.

Watch those carbs

- Cookies, cupcakes, soda, fruit drinks, and candy should be "now and then" foods, served once a week or less.
- Serve more whole grain foods, like whole wheat bread, brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain pasta, whole grain crackers, and cereal instead of white bread, white rice, and foods made only with white flour.
- Limit serving potatoes to one or two meals each week.
- Serve lots of other fruits and vegetables.

The best carbohydrates are digested slowly.



CAULIFLOWER MASHED "POTATOES"

1 medium-head cauliflower,
or 1 package (about 1 lb.) frozen,
about 4 cups
1/4 cup low fat milk
2-3 Tbsp. vegetable oil
Salt and pepper, to taste

■ Break the cauliflower into pieces (equal in size) and place in a microwave safe bowl or steamer. Sprinkle with water and cover. Steam until it is fork-tender. Fresh cauliflower may take 4 to 6 minutes in the microwave; frozen cauliflower may take 8 to 10 minutes. Drain it well and let the cauliflower cool slightly.

■ Heat the milk in a small saucepan and pour into a blender or food processor. Add 2 Tbsp. oil and the cauliflower in small batches. Purée until smooth. (For just a bit of texture, leave a few small pieces of cauliflower in the mix.) The mixture should be fluffy. If the purée is too dry or thick, put the blender on low speed and gradually add more oil in small batches until desired consistency is reached. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Makes 4 (1/2 cup) servings.

Mashed cauliflower can be treated just like regular mashed potatoes. If you have a favorite topping or flavor for your mashed potatoes, try it with this recipe. After puréeing, you could add curry powder, reduced-fat cheddar cheese, Parmesan cheese, fresh chives or scallions.

SPANISH CHICKEN AND RICE CASSEROLE

1 box (6 oz.) quick-cooking
brown rice (1 2/3 cups)
1 small onion, chopped
1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
1 can (14.5 oz.) stewed tomatoes
1 can (14.5 oz.) chicken broth
1/2 cup chopped green pepper
1 tsp. paprika
1/2 tsp. dried oregano
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 large, skinless, boneless
chicken breast (about 3/4 lb.),
cut into 1-inch pieces
1 bay leaf
1/2 cup frozen green peas
Salt, to taste

■ Preheat oven to 375°F. In a 2-quart casserole dish, combine rice, onion and oil. Add tomatoes, broth, paprika, oregano, ground pepper, green pepper, chicken and bay leaf. Stir, then cover and bake for 25 minutes.

■ Stir in peas and continue to bake, uncovered, for an additional 25 minutes or until broth is absorbed. Remove bay leaf and serve.

Makes 6 servings.

**The body needs
some carbohydrates
to function.**

FRUITED RICE

3/4 cup chopped dry apricots,
cherries or cranberries
1/3 cup raisins
1-1/2 cups quick-cooking brown rice
1-1/2 Tbsp. chicken bouillon
granules
1 Tbsp. dried parsley
(or 3-4 Tbsp. fresh)
2 tsp. grated orange rind, or to taste
3/4 tsp. onion powder

■ Place dried fruit and raisins in small bowl. Add water to cover. Let soak for about 5-10 minutes, then drain.

■ In large saucepan, boil water as listed on rice package directions. When water comes to a boil, add rice, fruit, raisins, bouillon, parsley, orange rind, and onion powder. Reduce heat.

■ Cover and simmer for 10 minutes, or until water is absorbed. Remove from heat and fluff gently with fork before serving.

Makes 6 servings.



Pennsylvania Pathways

Professional Development
for Child Caregivers

PENNSYLVANIA



Cooperative Extension
College of Agricultural Sciences

Sources: kidshealth.org; Harvard School of Public Health; American Institute for Cancer Research

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