



Share the Wellness Tip Fit Fact



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Is Carb a Four-Letter Word?

The case for or against carbohydrates isn't open and shut. Our bodies need them for energy, to fuel both our muscles and brains. But when we eat more carbohydrates than we burn, they're stored as fat. Confused?

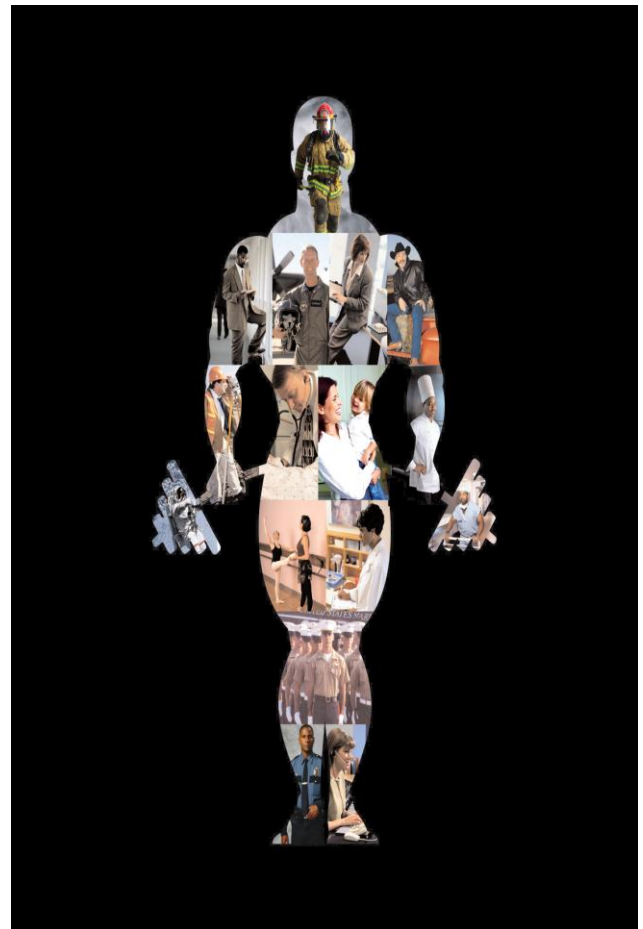
Nutrition experts describe carbs as simple or complex, based on their chemical structure. Table sugar, honey and maple syrup are examples of simple carbs. They digest quickly, offering quick energy but little nutrition. Plant foods such as grains, beans, fruits and vegetables are complex carbs. The type of starch and how much fiber they contain dictates how quickly these carbs are digested.

Some studies explore the glycemic index, which lists carbs according to how fast they're converted into glucose and absorbed into the bloodstream. Carbs that cause blood sugar to jump up quickly like white bread and white rice get a high rating. Foods with a lot of fiber rank low on the index, since they're digested more slowly. As a result, blood sugar levels rise gradually. These foods include whole grains, fruits such as pears and apples, and most vegetables.

But, the glycemic index differs from person to person, and it measures how one food eaten alone affects blood sugar, now how it applies to whole meals.

So, for now, stick to this advice from government health organizations: 45 to 65 percent of your daily calories should come from carbohydrates such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables.

For more information and resources on diet control and nutrition, visit the health and wellness section of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas website.



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- ♥ Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture, January 2011
- ♥ American Heart Association, June 2012