What Are Carbohydrates, and Why Are They Important?

Carbohydrates are macronutrients that can provide energy, protect against disease, and help you control your weight. There are three main types of carbohydrates:

Sugar: Occurs naturally in fruit, vegetables, and milk products
Starch: Found in vegetables, grains, and cooked dry beans and peas
Fiber: Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and cooked dry beans and peas are naturally fiber-rich

Why is Fiber Important?

Dietary fiber can be beneficial to your diet in many ways. It can:

- Provide a feeling of fullness, which may be helpful in controlling weight
- Add bulk to the diet, thereby aiding in digestion and elimination, and keeping bowels healthy
- Help control cholesterol and blood glucose levels by limiting or slowing their absorption

What Foods Contain Fiber?

Try the following to add more fiber to your diet:

- Bran cereal
- Whole grain bread, such as whole wheat
- Fresh, whole fruit
- Wheat germ

How Much Fiber Should You Eat?

How much fiber you should eat each day depends on your age and gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 or younger</td>
<td>38 grams</td>
<td>25 grams</td>
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<tr>
<td>51 or older</td>
<td>30 grams</td>
<td>21 grams</td>
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Adding Healthy Carbohydrates to Your Diet

Try these ideas to help you add healthy carbohydrates:

- Make brown rice as a side dish instead of enriched pasta
- Add raspberries to a container of low-fat yogurt
- Eat oatmeal for a hearty breakfast

Next Steps

1. Read “Finding Fiber in Foods”
2. Track this week’s intake online in the Health Trackers section of the Wellness website (Optional)

Remember

Carbohydrates can provide energy and help control weight.