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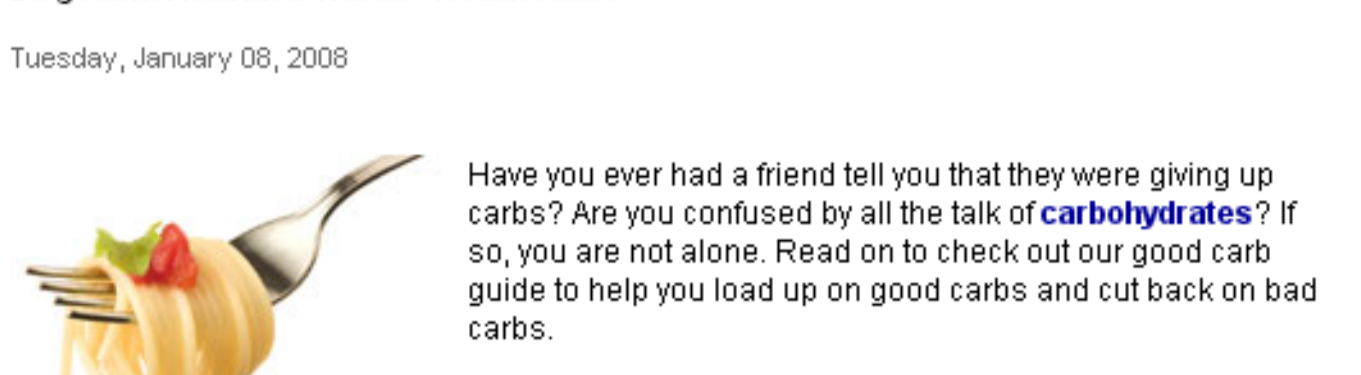
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The Ultimate Good Carb Guide

Blog Name: Nutrition Tidbits - HealthCastle



Have you ever had a friend tell you that they were giving up carbs? Are you confused by all the talk of **carbohydrates**? If so, you are not alone. Read on to check out our good carb guide to help you load up on good carbs and cut back on bad carbs.

Carb 101

Carbohydrates, despite their bad rap, are an essential component of a healthy, well-balanced diet. But what kind of carbs?

Carbohydrates are found in many foods in different forms: **sugars**, **starches**, and **fiber**. Your body requires all three forms at different times. For example, during long periods of exercise (lasting more than 1 hour), sugars are the best source of fuel - they are used quickly by the body when your body needs energy most. By contrast, starches and fiber should be the bulk of your carbohydrate intake on a daily basis. This is because starches and fiber are broken down slower by the body and provide the body with dietary bulk (fiber) to help with digestive health, controlling blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and preventing some types of cancers.

The Ultimate Good Carb Guide

1. Vegetables and Fruits

- Aim for at least 2 cups of fruits and 2.5 cups of vegetables to help you get the nutrients found in these super foods. Filling up on vegetables and fruits will help you reduce your intake of other foods as well.

- Go for fiber-rich sources - eating more vegetables and fruits with the skin will optimize your intake of fiber. For example, an orange contains much more fiber than a glass of orange juice. A pear (eaten with the skin) has nearly twice the fiber found in a banana.

- You may have heard that potatoes and bananas should be avoided. But in reality, these are considered "good" carbs. It's just a matter of making sure that you are consuming an appropriate portion - a small-medium sized banana, and 1/2 to 1 cup of potatoes (depending on your size and meal composition) is a healthy choice.

2. Cereals

- Go for the rule of threes: choose a **breakfast cereal** that contains more than 3 grams of fiber and **protein**, while having less than 30 grams of total carbohydrates. It may be hard to meet the limit on total carbohydrates if you are looking at a higher fiber cereal. In this case, I recommend subtracting the total amount of fiber from the total carbohydrates to see how it works out. (For example: A serving of Kellogg's Cracklin' Oat Bran (3/4 cup) contains 35g of total carbohydrates and 6g of fiber. Subtracting the fiber from the total carbohydrates puts total carbohydrate intake per serving at 29g).

- Of course, eating whole grain cereals is always a great idea (oatmeal, cream of wheat, etc.).

3. Breads

- As with breakfast cereals, the bakery aisle is an overwhelming area! Shooting to consume a bread that contains at least 3 grams of fiber and 3 grams of protein per slice will help to optimize your intake of nutrients.

4. Beans

- These are powerhouses for fiber and protein! Adding a few garbanzo beans to your salad helps increase your intake of healthy carbs and add more variety to your diet. Consider adding different beans (white or red kidney, garbanzo, black beans, etc.) to your favorite recipes to help up your nutrient intake.

The Low Down on Carbs

You probably have a good idea of what the "bad" carbs are - baked goods like cookies and cakes, as well as highly refined sugary foods such as sodas and candy. However, there are foods that are considered to be good sources of carbohydrates, unless the portion gets out of hand. For example, a typical bagel is equivalent to 3-4 slices of bread! So, the bottom line with carbohydrates is to ensure that you are not overdoing your portions.

Consider all the sources of carbohydrates for your meal and make sure that you are consuming a reasonable amount for your dietary needs (dependent on your size and activity level). Generally, we don't need more than the equivalent of 2 slices of bread and 1/2 to 1 cup of fruits and/or vegetables each meal.

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