

It's a Carb-Knock Life for Us

7 of the best complex Carbohydrate food selections.

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It must be hard to be a carbohydrate. They're always getting mixed signals. One day you love them and they're all that you can think about but then the next day you cut them off completely and blame them for all of your problems. You may even resort to shameful stereotypes by declaring that "all carbs are bad" and "all carbs will make you fat" when that couldn't be any further from the truth!

Perhaps the recent wave of low-carbohydrate diets has given them a bad reputation however "low-carb" should never be mistaken for "no-carbs." And being told that you should increase your protein consumption should never be mistaken as a recommendation to eliminate all carbs from your diet either.

Carbohydrates are actually one of your body's primary energy sources so not having enough of them in your system could seriously derail your fitness goals. What's important to remember however, is that not all carbs are created equal. There's a major difference between a bowl of oatmeal and a bowl of Cap'n Crunch!

How so? Carbohydrates are divided into two main categories: simple and complex. Complex carbohydrates generally contain more nutrients and take longer to digest so they'll leave you satisfied longer. Simple carbohydrates on the other hand, are mostly filled with sugar and spice, not everything nice, so you'll usually end up having to eat more of these to feel satisfied. Remember Lays old slogan for their potato chips (simple carbs) "you can't eat just one?" That was very truthful advertising!

Consider simple carbs as a piece of paper being tossed into a fire. Sure it will cause an immediate burst but that spark will quickly flame out. Complex carbs, on the other hand, are more like logs. They burn slowly and last a long time.

Of course, there's a time and place for everything, so all simple carbs aren't entirely bad either. In fact, many fruits and vegetables can be classified as simple carbohydrates so you'll still want to consume plenty of those. Instead, try to scale back your consumption of processed foods, sugary drinks and snacks such as donuts, soda and candy.

With that said, here are several of the best complex carbohydrate food selections:

- 1. Oatmeal** – Since I already mentioned it during the introduction, we might as well start here. Please note however that I'm referring to real oatmeal, not necessarily the sugary flavored instant oatmeal. Oatmeal has been shown to help reduce bad cholesterol, lower the risk of cancer and aid with memory and mental functioning. Oatmeal is also contained in many hair and skin products as its nutrients have been shown to reduce acne, soften dry skin and improve brittle hair.
- 2. Kashi and other Bran or Whole Grain Cereals** – Whole grain cereals tend to contain less sugar and more protein

than their sugary counterparts. They also tend to contain a larger volume of vitamins and minerals, particularly phosphorus which is essential for brain tissue and lecithin which is essential for cardiovascular functioning.

- 3. Brown Rice** – Brown rice has been shown to lower the risk of colon cancer and heart disease. Research has also found it useful for lowering cholesterol and reducing the frequency of migraine headaches. Additionally, brown rice contains powerful antioxidants that are essential for improving the body's immune system and for proper thyroid functioning.
- 4. Whole Wheat or Gluten Free Pasta** – Whole wheat and gluten free pastas contain the fibers and nutrients often lost during the processing of regular pasta all while providing the similar taste and feel of the original. It's also been shown to help lower your risk for diabetes, gum disease, tooth loss and cancer.
- 5. Whole Grain Bread** – Very similar to whole grain pasta or brown rice, whole grain breads help reduce belly fat, lower the risk of stroke, heart disease and cancer.
- 6. Lentils** – Not only are lentils an excellent source of complex carbohydrates, they are also packed full of protein, fiber and iron in addition to vitamins C, B and eight essential amino acids! Not only will lentils provide you with energy, they'll also provide a boost to your immune, digestive and nervous systems!
- 7. Sweet Potato** – Sweet potatoes provide a slew of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants and have been shown to reduce symptoms from asthma, bronchitis, arthritis and inflammation!

Now take a look around your kitchen and take note of the carbohydrates that you see. If all that you see are cookies, chips and none of the items mentioned above, it might be time for you to reassess your nutrition habits!

Remember, not all carbs are bad so there's no reason to eliminate them entirely. Instead, try and replace a few of your favorite simple carbs with several options from the list above. You'll be surprised how big of a change this will have on your waistline and your overall health! See? Losing weight doesn't have to be so "complex" after all...



Darrell W. Butler has trained, managed and consulted for fitness centers and media outlets around the world. When he's not training a client or sharing his words of wisdom, you can catch him drinking a PFC Berries A'More Recovery Shake at his local gym's juice bar! For more information visit the Darrell Butler Personal Training website at www.dbptonline.com

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