

You must have heard about the “low carb” hype being discussed around you all the time. There is a small portion of the trend that is actually sensible and the rest is bunk. We do not have a very clear idea of what types of carbs are there and what they do once they get into our bodies. Some people are totally avoiding carbs whereas others are simply eating too much of high carbohydrate containing foods combined with very little or no exercise, which simply makes them fat. This lack of knowledge is causing people to fail their dieting regiments and end up gaining more weight than they had before their diet.

There are two types of carbs- simple and complex. Simple carbs are the ones you want to avoid. They have little or no nutritional value and are highly processed or refined. They are bad for the body. They are made up mostly of sugar- glucose and fructose, lactose from milk, sucrose from cane or beet sugar, and others. Table sugar is pure sucrose. You need to avoid the carbs that contain simple sugars such as sucrose, glucose, and maltose, which releases too quickly, almost violently, into bodies, causing “sugar highs” and then “crashes”. This tends to leave us hungry, so we eat more. Simple carbs include sodas, candy, white breads, white rice, white flour, white pasta, sugar and refined and processed foods. These foods have given the carbs a bad reputation. Researchers from Northumbria University in England examined the difference between the effects of refined carbs and whole-grain carbs.

*Refined carbs are found in soda and processed foods. Whole-grain carbs are what you get in fruits, vegetables and some breads, cereals and pasta.*

Food manufacturers have taken out all the nutrients, vitamins and minerals from natural grains like wheat and rice to achieve the color and texture change. This refining process totally compromises the nutritional integrity of the food for all appearances. So, the food manufacturers added these nutrients back and called that “enriched” or “fortified. But we can not fool the mother nature. Our body cannot absorb the minerals and vitamins with same ease from these fortified or enriched foods. Now you know that pasta, white bread, bagels, cake, cookies, muffins, white rice and pastries you eat do not have healthy carbs. You may also notice moderate to severe mood swings and energy surges and losses. The only sensible suggestion is to avoid these simple carbs.

However, all carbs are not bad. Complex carbs are good for you, they are vital and unlike simple carbs, contain longer chains of sugar molecules; these usually take more time for the body to break down and use. Complex carbs release gradually, providing a steady source of energy. These carbs get absorbed slowly into our systems, avoid spikes in blood sugar levels. *Avoiding and limiting them, as low carb diet suggests, is not at all a good idea and moreover it is dangerous.* Carbs are actually a major source of energy for the body. Even though fat and proteins can be burned for fuel, carbs are the most important and efficient energy source. They are loaded with vitamins and minerals, photochemicals and other essential nutrients. They contain a good amount of fiber which is good for the digestive system. Complex

carbs are fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes (lentils and beans). The fiber in fruits and vegetables changes the way that the body processes their sugars and slows down their digestion, making them a bit more like complex carbohydrates. Complex carbs diets don't require you to exercise everyday or count calories – you can eat food that makes you feel full and enjoy rich foods. These actually prevent insulin spikes and stabilize your blood sugar level. Excess insulin encourages fat storage.

Fruit among them is, quite possibly the most perfect food in the existence. It is unique in that it barely requires any work to be digested. They are high in natural enzymes and effortlessly pass through the body, supplying carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins, minerals, fatty acids, amino acids and cancer fighting tannins and flavonoids. Fruits are mainly made up of mostly water, fruit hydrates the body and aids in cleansing, detoxifying and eliminating. Thus if you find any woman around you announcing that she doesn't eat fruit because it is too high in sugar or does not drink juice because it has so many calories, don't get taken in by these facts.

Most of the times when you have a satanic craving for sugar, it is in reality a carb craving. Brushing your teeth, talking to someone or taking a walk around won't make it go away. In such time complex carbs are good for your body and for your mood. Many times we try to regulate our moods with food. Eating complex carbs will have a positive effect on your mood as it affects serotonin - feel good neurotransmitters, levels. On the other hand high protein diets can have a negative effect on serotonin levels. So, when you are feeling tired, cranky or depressed, instead of having a piece of cake, eat an apple or a piece of wholegrain toast to feel good again.

The three energy-providing components of foods are carbohydrates, protein, and fat. Carbs are the main energy source for the body, and they're the main source of calories in virtually every diet worldwide. Do not avoid complex carbs in your diet because if you do so, your body will start using fat and protein for energy, which can impede the development of the brain and other bodily functions. Burning fats releases ketones which are acid by-products, they can be harmful. The ketons increase the pH of the body and make you feel acidic. It can further lead to dehydration and constipation. A low carb diet can result in reduced athletic performance with lower carbohydrate stored in the muscle and high protein intake can increase renal loss of calcium so caution is advised for persons at-risk for osteoporosis. In addition high protein intake increases the load on kidneys to excrete excess nitrogen. People on low carb diets have reported lower cholesterol, increased energy, reduced sugar cravings, reduced appetite and better concentration.

Thus, having complex carbs in your diet will provide you energy, minerals and vitamins which are essential for a healthy body and mind. To know if a packaged food is made of simple or complex carbohydrates, always look at the label when you buy. Read and find exactly what you are getting. If the ingredients are whole-wheat flour or whole-oat flour, it's likely going to be a complex carbohydrate.