

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are a major component of our diet, as most foods contain carbohydrates to some extent. Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables are all good sources of carbohydrates. All types of carbohydrates can have a place in our diet. For specific details on the benefits of fruit, [click here](#), and for the benefits of vegetables, [click here](#).

It is recommended that 45-65% of the foods that we eat each day are carbohydrate foods.¹ This is because they give our bodies instant energy. When we eat them, our bodies use the glucose they contain to fuel our cells.² When we eat whole foods instead of processed foods, we get longer-lasting energy.³ This is because it takes longer for our bodies to break down the carbohydrates when we eat whole carbohydrates (such as brown rice) versus when we eat processed carbohydrates (such as crackers or white bread).

Whole grains are a great carbohydrate source because they are full of nutrients and give long-lasting energy.³ They are called whole grains because they contain all parts of the grain: bran, germ, and endosperm. Processed grains only contain the endosperm as all other parts of the grain have been removed.³ The bran and the germ contain more fiber and nutrients than the endosperm, which is why it is important to include them in our diets.³ According to the USDA and their MyPlate diagram, grains should make up a quarter of our meals, and approximately half of the grains that we eat should be whole grains.⁴

Some Examples of Whole Grains⁴

- Brown Rice
- Whole Wheat
- Farro
- Barley
- Oats
- Quinoa

Sometimes it can be hard to exchange what we are used to eating for whole-grain options. Here are some tips for adding more whole grains to your diet:

- Look for 100% whole wheat bread at the grocery store.
- Try something new, like the less common grains farro or barley.
- Switch out white bread and tortillas for whole wheat options.
- Incorporate oats by making oatmeal, granola, or energy bites.
- Try brown rice instead of white rice or make a 50-50 mix of the two.

Lastly, it is important to note that added sugars are also a type of carbohydrate. Added sugars are sugars we add to our foods, such as white sugar, honey, maple syrup, etc. We should have added sugars in moderation because they are low in nutrients. However, they are a delicious part of a balanced diet and can be eaten some of the time. For more information on added sugars, [click here](#).

Spiced Apple Oatmeal for One:



Ingredients:

- 0.5 cup old-fashioned oats
- 1.25 cups water
- Half a medium apple, diced into cubes
- 0.5 tsp cinnamon
- A pinch of cardamom (optional)
- 0.25 cup milk
- 1.5 tsp brown sugar

Instructions:

1. Boil water in a saucepan over medium heat.
2. Add diced apples to the boiling water and cook until they are starting to get soft.

3. Add oatmeal to the apples and water and cook for 5 minutes, or until water is dissolved and the oats are cooked through.
4. Once the oats are done, transfer the oat mixture to a bowl and add the cinnamon, cardamom (optional), milk, and brown sugar. Mix well.
5. Serve and enjoy!

Note: You can use any type of oat you wish for this recipe. Just adjust the cooking time of the oats according to the package instructions.

Sources:

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3. Whole grains. The Nutrition Source. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/whole-grains/>. Published November 4, 2019. Accessed November 19, 2022.
4. Grains. MyPlate. <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/grains>. Accessed November 19, 2022.