

# SENIOR NUTRITION NEWSLETTER

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## Healthy Carbs

### We're Talking Carbohydrates

The fading frenzy over “good carbs” and “bad carbs” leaves us with a lot to talk about! Out of this fad came many new books, diets, supplements, snacks and drinks advertising “low carb & high protein.” Did I mention all the confusion, too? So are there really good carbs and bad carbs? Any carbohydrate can be part of a healthy diet as long as we consume the right amounts of each type. Read on for more information on the types of carbohydrates, and how much to consume of each type.



### Carbohydrates are for Energy!

Our bodies need to take in carbohydrates for energy. We can get carbohydrates from all of the food groups, with the greatest concentration coming from the Grain group. Just to review, the Grain group contains cereals, bread, pasta, crackers, tortillas, grits, and grains like wheat, rice, and oats. Our digestive systems break down the carbohydrates we eat into glucose, a simple sugar. Glucose enters our bloodstream, and with the help of insulin, enters our body cells. Our cells break glucose apart to get the energy they need to do the work that cells do, like transporting nutrients and sending important signals throughout the body.

People with diabetes know how important glucose is for energy because their bodies have trouble using the insulin that gets glucose into the cell. Someone with diabetes also knows that not all carbohydrates are the same. Some carbohydrates will enter the bloodstream too fast (like sugar and white flour), causing blood sugar to rise rapidly. Other carbohydrates will break down more slowly (like whole grains and fiber), giving a steady release of energy over time.

So, everyone needs carbohydrates for energy. Some carbohydrates may be considered “bad” for people with diabetes if they are broken down into blood sugar too fast. But, people with diabetes aren’t the only ones who benefit from knowing the different types of carbohydrates. Everyone can benefit from learning about “healthy carbs”, or, carbs that our bodies break down slowly and have other health benefits as well!

Healthy carbs from the Grains food group are the “whole grains”, meaning they have not been broken down, or refined, in the milling process. These grains will contain fiber and all nutrients intact. Whole grains should be consumed most often, or at least half of your grains for the day should be whole grains. See box below for examples.



**Examples of Healthy Carbs**

100% Whole Grain Bread  
Brown Rice  
Oatmeal  
Whole Wheat Flour  
Bulgur & Quinoa  
Popcorn

Fiber from Fruits and Vegetables



You may have known or guessed by now that carbs that should be limited in the diet include sugar and refined flours, like sweets, desserts, and white flour.



### What’s In Those Healthy Carbs?

Whole grains contain...

- **Fiber**, which helps keep our digestive tract moving and aids immune function
- **Iron**, needed for oxygen transport through the body
- **B vitamins**, needed for many cell functions, like cell division, red blood cell formation, and nerve transmission.

Look for **“100% Whole Wheat”** on the front label of the next loaf of bread you buy. If the label has this **exact** statement, then the bread is made with 100% whole grain wheat. The statements, “Made with Whole Grains”, “Whole Wheat” and “Wheat Bread” do not mean the same!

### But aren’t too many “healthy carbs” also not good for us?

That is true. Carbohydrates contain Calories and if we get too many Calories, we can gain unnecessary weight. Too many servings from the grains group could also crowd out foods from the other food groups. The average 2,000 Calorie diet requires about 6 ounces of grains every day. Three of these ounces should be whole grains.

<b>One ounce</b> from the grain group equals:	<b>1 slice</b> of bread
	<b>1/2 cup</b> cooked rice, pasta, oatmeal, or other cooked cereal
	<b>1 cup</b> cold cereal

So if you had 1/2 cup of oatmeal, 1/2 cup of brown rice, and 1 slice of whole wheat bread today, you have met your whole-grain needs and half of your servings from the grains group!

## 5 A Day Wheat Bulgur (Main or side dish)

1 medium chopped onion  
1 cup chopped broccoli  
1 cup shredded carrots  
1 small chopped green pepper - may use red or yellow pepper  
1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley or 2 Tablespoons dried  
1 teaspoon canola oil  
1 1/2 cups dry bulgur  
2 cups chicken broth, low-sodium  
8 ounces canned, drained chickpeas



Wash and chop fresh onion, broccoli, carrots, pepper and parsley (if using fresh parsley). Heat canola oil in a large skillet. Add onions and cook until soft. Add bulgur and stir to coat. Add 2 cups chicken broth to the skillet, bring to a boil. Lower the heat, add remaining vegetables and chickpeas. Cook for 10 minutes or until the liquid is absorbed. Add parsley and stir. Serve warm or cold. Makes 8 servings.

**Nutrition Facts per Serving:** 150 Calories 1.5g fat 7g fiber 140mg sodium

**Source:** Adapted from Choices: Steps Toward Health University of Massachusetts Extension Nutrition Education Program

## Grilled Cheese and Fruit Sandwich

2 slices whole wheat bread (or raisin bread made with whole wheat flour)  
1/2 Tbsp. soft margarine spread  
1 slice processed American cheese food  
1/2 apple or pear, thinly sliced

Spread one side of each bread slice lightly with margarine. Place 1 slice of bread, margarine side down, and top with cheese. Arrange fruit slices over cheese. Top with remaining bread slice, margarine side up. Place sandwich on griddle or skillet over medium heat. Cook 2 to 3 minutes, turn, and cook 2 to 3 minutes more or until golden and cheese is melted. Makes one serving.

**Nutrition Facts per Serving:** 400 Calories 16g fat 4.5g sat. fat 910mg sodium  
9g fiber

Source: EFNEP

## Zesty & Quick Rice Salad

2 cups chilled cooked brown rice  
1 can artichoke hearts, drained and rinsed  
1/2 cup Italian dressing  
4 Tbsp. parmesan cheese

Chop or break apart artichoke hearts into bite-size pieces. Mix together rice, Italian dressing, and parmesan cheese until rice is coated. Stir in artichoke hearts. Serve chilled. Makes 4 servings.

Nutrition Facts per Serving: 190 Calories 5g fat 1.5g sat. fat 520mg sodium 2g fiber  
Source: The Four Ingredient Cookbook by Coffee & Kale

## Plum Crisp

4-5 medium plums  
1/4 cup quick-cooking oatmeal  
1/4 cup flour  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1 Tbsp. cinnamon  
1/4 cup margarine



Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease the bottom and sides of a square pan. Remove the cores of the plums and slice plums. Spread sliced plums on bottom of pan. Cut margarine into small pieces and put in a medium-sized bowl. Add the oatmeal, flour, brown sugar and cinnamon. Using 2 knives or a pastry-cutter, cut margarine into dry ingredients until small crumbs form. Sprinkle mixture over the top of the plums. Bake in the oven for about 20 minutes. Makes 8 servings.

Nutrition Facts per Serving: 160 Calories 6g fat 1g sat. fat 50mg sodium 2g fiber  
Source: USDA Snap-Ed Recipe Finder