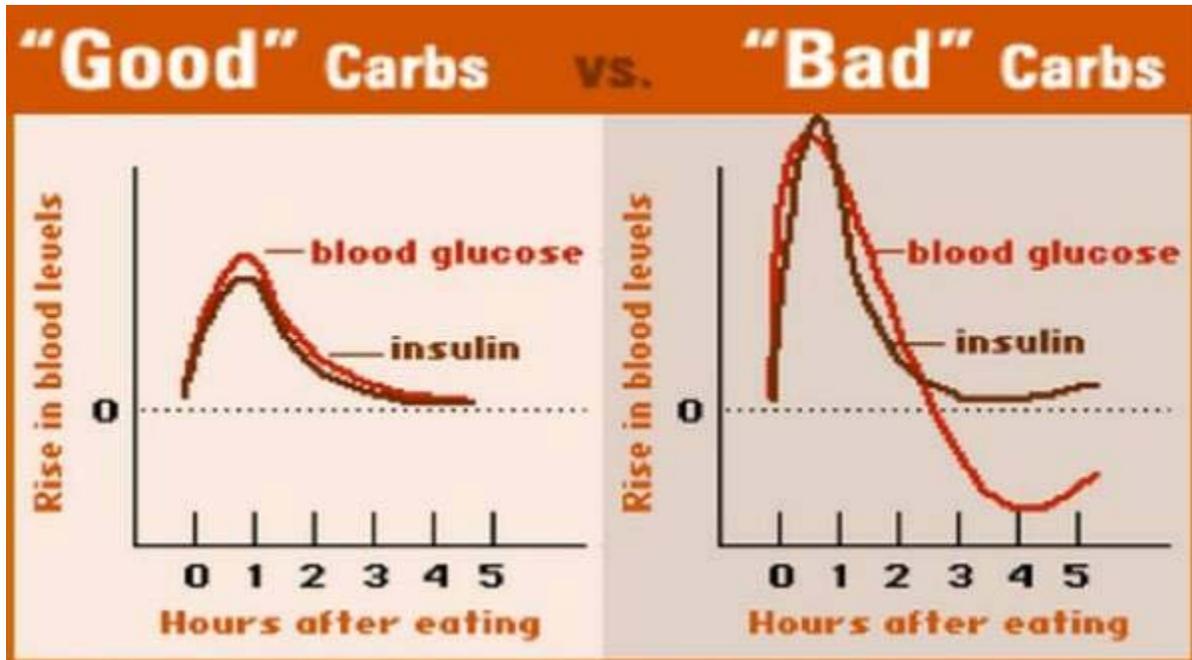


Are all Carbs Bad?

Jan 18 Posted by [Linda Carney MD](#) in [Health](#)



Obesity rates have skyrocketed and has grown to concerning proportions in the last decade. It's estimated that 80% of adults in the U.S. are overweight. In fact, due to rising obesity rates in children, doctors are seeing an alarming number of [children suffering from chronic diseases](#) that use to be seen only in middle-aged adults. With this in mind, it's no surprise that millions of Americans are looking for a quick and easy weight-loss solution.

Desperate for rapid weight loss, many have turned to eating high-protein, low-carb diets in which meat is highly revered. At the same time, [popular low-carb diet books](#) malign the health benefits of many carbs including whole grains, beans, nuts/seeds and starchy vegetables. The common assertion is that carbs produce insulin spikes, resulting in unwanted weight gain. For this reason, all carbs have become the dieter's adversary. The truth of the matter is, meat causes more insulin to be released than carbs from whole plant foods. [Click here to see how meat produces the same insulin spike as pure sugar](#). Equally important, there are two types of carbs: refined and unrefined. One type does produce insulin spikes while the other does not. Below, we have highlighted an article written by Cole Adam, a registered dietitian and creator of the website [Dietitian on a Mission](#). In his article, [Carbs are not Your Enemy!](#) Cole explains the difference between refined and unrefined carbs.

Not all Carbs are Bad



Cole points out that carbohydrate is a macronutrient found in a wide variety of foods. "Fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts and seeds all contain carbohydrates to some degree. [Carbohydrates are our body's primary source of fuel, especially for our brain](#). They supply our body with the energy needed to perform basic functions. We should not avoid carbohydrates, however we should be aware of which types to consume. How these carbohydrate-containing foods are processed, determines how the carbohydrates within them affect our body. There are essentially two forms of carbohydrate-containing foods, refined (bad) and unrefined (good)."

Refined Carbs (Bad)

"Refined foods are processed in a way that strips them of their fiber. This loss of fiber increases the rate at which the carbohydrates are absorbed, resulting in a rapid spike in blood sugar. A spike in blood sugar causes a large amount of insulin to be secreted to bring it back down. Insulin is very good at storing energy and promoting growth. This is why consuming large amounts of refined foods, resulting in excessive insulin secretion, promotes weight gain. Refined carbohydrate-containing foods should be avoided as much as possible."

The "Good Carbs" vs "Bad Carbs" illustration at the top of this blog demonstrates how unrefined carbohydrates (left) "results in a lower spike in blood sugar, which requires less insulin. A meal containing refined carbohydrates (right) causes a rapid increase in blood sugar, which requires a large amount of insulin."

Examples of Refined Carbs

- Low-fat, or fat-free dairy products
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- Fruit juice (even homemade fruit juices)
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- Any sugar (or high fructose corn syrup) sweetened beverage: soda, sweet tea, energy drinks, vitamin water, Gatorade, etc.

- Refined grains and their products: white bread, white pasta, white rice, muffins, bagels, donuts, pastries, crackers, pretzels, etc.
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- Sugary foods: cake, cookies, baked goods, candy, desserts, frozen yogurt, etc.

Unrefined (Good)

"Carbohydrates from unrefined foods (in their whole form) contain all of the original fiber and nutrients. It is this fiber that causes a slow and steady increase in blood sugar. As a result, less insulin is required (see photo above), and our body is able to utilize the energy from carbs without overdoing it. Always choose unrefined foods. These foods are healthier, usually packed with nutrients, and will not promote weight gain."

Examples of Unrefined Carbs

- Vegetables: Some veggies contain more carbohydrates than others, but all whole vegetables are unrefined (unless they've been fried or smothered in butter and salt)
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- Whole fruit: Yes fruit contains sugar, but it also contains fiber and numerous health-promoting nutrients like vitamins, antioxidants and phytochemicals.
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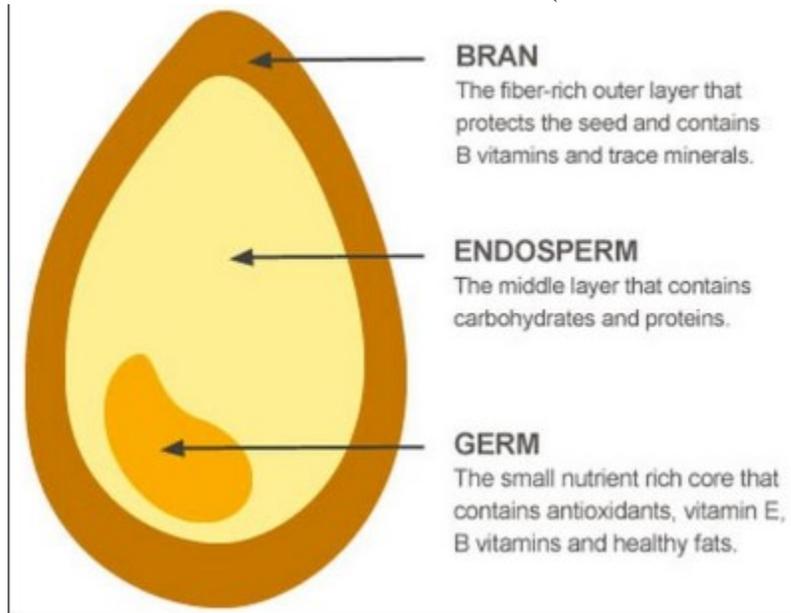
- Legumes ([beans](#), [peas](#), [lentils](#), soy): Legumes are packed with fiber, which again, stabilizes our blood sugar. Adding these to a meal really helps moderate blood sugar.
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- Whole grains: A "whole grain" contains all three original components of the grain kernel. The picture below is of a whole grain kernel. The bran, endosperm and germ are all still there. When a grain is refined, the bran and germ are removed leaving just the starchy endosperm. The removal of these two parts takes away the fiber and nutrients. This is why whole grains are so much healthier than refined grains.

Examples Whole Grains

- Oats, hulled barley, brown rice, whole wheat, corn, quinoa, wild rice, etc. For a list of more whole grains ([click here](#)).
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- Products made with with flour (bread, pasta, couscous, etc) may or may not be whole grain. To learn how to identify foods that are 100% whole grain ([click here](#)). The key is to look for the words: 100% Whole Grain (or 100% whole wheat).



Processed and refined foods have had the majority of their nutrients, water and [fiber](#) removed; all of which supports optimal health and weight. Consequently, 97% of Americans consume [fiber-deficient diets](#). These foods are not needed in our diet and are associated with [serious health problems](#). For those who delight in eating meat, a low-carb diet satisfies the need for [high-fat, highly-palatable, calorie-rich foods](#).

Cole emphasizes that low-carb diets "can result in rapid weight loss, however most of this is water weight. As soon as carbohydrates are re-introduced, the water weight returns and carbs take the blame (when actually that's just the nature of the diet). As a Dietitian, I would never recommend this type of low-carb, high animal product fad diet. It is not sustainable, rarely results in long-term weight loss, and is a huge burden on the environment." High-protein, low-carb diets increase the risk of [all-cause mortality](#), including [cardiovascular](#) and cancer just to name a few. More information regarding low-carb diets can be seen [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Summary

Cole summarizes by saying: "Carbohydrates are not bad, our body ([especially our brain](#)) loves to use them for energy. However, carbohydrates from refined foods should be avoided, as they have been processed in a way that makes them harmful to our body. Instead, choose carbohydrates from unrefined foods. These are food in their original, or minimally processed, state. They contain all of the original fiber and nutrients, and as a result, are very beneficial to us. Lastly, when buying grains or grain products, make sure they are 100% whole grain." Click here to see Cole's [Dietitian on a Mission facebook page](#).

<http://www.drcarney.com/blog/entry/are-all-carbs-bad>

For more information, click on the following links:

- (1) [Dr. Carney's Diabetes Pinterest Board](#)
- (2) [Dr. Carney's Whole Grains Pinterest Board](#)
- (3) [Dr. Carney's Animal-Based Diets Promote Illness Pinterest Board](#)
- (4) [Dr. Carney's Low-Carb, High-Protein Pinterest Board](#)
- (5) [Dr. Carney's Heart Disease Pinterest Board](#)

Shared Successes and Struggles

We would love to hear your [Success Stories](#) or your [Personal Struggles](#) in our rapidly growing [Plant-based Low-fat Online Community](#) at Starch-Smart.com.

