

Function of carbohydrates

The main function of carbohydrates is **energy**, they are the main source of energy in the diet. Muscles need carbohydrates as their main source of fuel. They also help us to **feel fuller for longer** which helps to prevent weight gain. They also provide **dietary fibre**, which helps the digestive system to work properly to prevent constipation. Starchy foods provide nutrients to the diet including B vitamins, iron, calcium and folic acid.

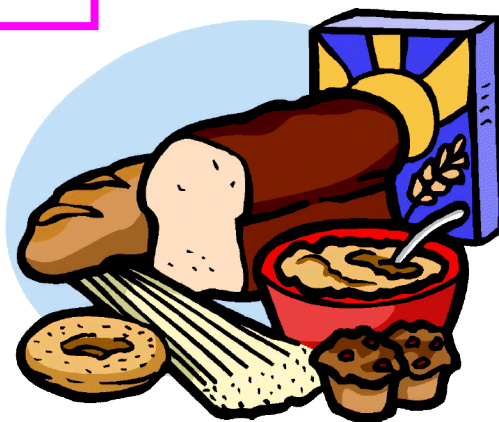
Types of carbohydrates

Carbohydrates can be split into two main groups – **sugars** and **starches**.

Sugars can be found naturally for example in fruits and vegetables or they can be added to food during the manufacturing process e.g. putting sugar into cakes and sweets.

Starches can be found in foods such as potatoes, bread, pasta and rice as well as vegetables and fruit in smaller amounts.

Macronutrients Carbohydrates



How do carbohydrates give us energy?

When we eat carbohydrates our body breaks down the sugar and starch into glucose which is absorbed into our blood and used as energy.

Sugars are also known as simple carbohydrates. The body digests them **quickly** and they give us a **short burst of energy**.

Starchy or complex carbohydrates as they are also known take longer to digest than simple ones (sugars). They gradually increase blood sugar levels and provide a **slow, steady release of energy**.

50% of our energy should come from starchy carbohydrates.

Deficiency and excesses

If we **don't have enough carbohydrates** our blood sugar levels drop which makes us **hungry and tired**. Our body will also start to use fat and protein for energy. This can cause us to lose muscle which makes us weaker.

Too many carbohydrates can turn to fat which can cause **obesity** and other health issues. Eating too many sugary foods can cause **tooth decay**. It can also lead to Type 2 Diabetes.

CARBOHYDRATES

STARCHY CARBS

Bread



Potatoes



Rice



Pulses



SUGARS

Natural Sugars

Fruit sugar (fructose)



Milk sugar (lactose)



Free Sugars

Table sugar (sucrose)



Biscuit



Honey



Unsweetened fruit juice



