

Are Carbs Fattening?

Carbohydrates are essential for life! They are found in grain foods such as cereals, bread, rice, pasta and quinoa, as well as starchy vegetables, fruit, legumes/lentils, yoghurt, milk and milk alternatives. They provide your body with energy and are made of sugars, starches, and fibre.

Our brain will only metabolise (breakdown, absorb and use) glucose, which comes from carbohydrates, so we need to eat 'carbs' both for fuel for our brain and energy for our body. Foods that contain carbohydrates also have essential vitamins and minerals, such as B vitamins, magnesium, selenium, vitamin C, vitamin E, folate, potassium and dietary fibre (when choosing the wholegrain or wholemeal varieties).

Fad diets often push that if you want to lose weight, you need to cut out 'carbs', however, there is no scientific evidence that supports the argument to cut all carbohydrates from a healthy diet! This seems to cause confusion and concern that carbohydrate-rich foods will make you gain weight. The TRUTH is, when choosing high-quality carbohydrates in the right amounts, they actually help to maintain a healthy weight. Most Australians consume less than half the recommended quantity of grain foods (4-6 serves) and importantly, the wholegrain varieties of these foods are recommended as these contain the three layers of the grain where all the nutrients are held - minerals, antioxidants and dietary fibre.

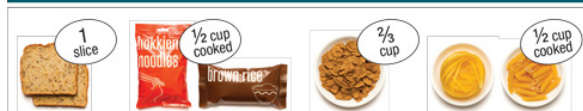
Have you heard the term GI (glycaemic index)? This is a term that is considered when choosing the quality of a carbohydrate food and indicates how slowly or quickly that food breaks down in the body. Low GI foods will break down slowly, give you longer lasting energy and help to maintain blood glucose levels. They include foods such as wholegrain rice, bread and pasta, fruit, milk, yoghurt, wholegrain cereal and legumes. Choose these rather than refined carbohydrates (sugars and refined grains that have been stripped of all bran, fibre and nutrients) such as biscuits, cakes, sweets and pastries to assist in maintaining healthy weight.

A SERVE OF GRAIN (CEREAL) FOODS IS 500KJ WHICH IS:

What is a serve of grain* (cereal) food?

A standard serve is (500kJ) or:

1 slice (40g)	bread
½ medium (40g)	roll or flat bread
½ cup (75-120g)	cooked rice, pasta, noodles, barley, buckwheat, semolina, polenta, bulgur or quinoa
½ cup (120g)	cooked porridge
⅔ cup (30g)	wheat cereal flakes
¼ cup (30g)	muesli
3 (35g)	crispbreads
1 (60g)	crumpet
1 small (35g)	English muffin or scone



*Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties

Examples of Low GI Foods:

- Wholegrain breads
- Pasta, quinoa & rice (preferably brown/whole grain varieties)
- Oats
- Fresh, canned or dried fruit
- Yoghurt and milk
- Legumes e.g. beans, chickpeas, lentils

Examples of High GI Foods:

- White bread
- Processed cereals
- Short grain rice
- Potato
- Most cracker biscuits
- Watermelon

So say yes to high-quality carbohydrates and keep your brain and body functioning well and receiving the nutrients they need to maintain energy levels and receive essential vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre!

Extra reading:

- [All about grains \(cereal\) foods](#)
- [Are carbs fattening?](#)
- [All you need to know about carbohydrates](#)