

What are 'slow carbs'? How they can help you lose weight and be healthier

By Lisa Young

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You don't have to ditch carbs for a healthy diet.

Get over your fear of carbs.

As a nutritionist, I'm seeing more people interested in ditching carbohydrates in an attempt to eat healthier and shed a few pounds. But will you be any healthier without them? Will you lose weight?

Carbohydrates are an often-misunderstood nutrient. Carbohydrates are found in just about every food group — from fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy and even protein-containing legumes and nuts. The [U.S. Dietary Guidelines](#) advise that we get 45-65 percent of our calories from carbs.



Importantly, they are talking about the healthier carbs.

Limiting your intake of white bread, white pasta, cakes, cookies and other refined grains is a good idea.

Indeed, these unhealthy carbs are a source of unnecessary calories with few nutrients.

Fill up on fiber-rich carbs

However, I advise against cutting out fiber-rich and healthy carbs like those found in fruits, vegetables, legumes including lentils and chickpeas, and healthy whole grains such as steel-cut oats, whole-wheat bread, farro and quinoa. These carbs may even reduce the incidence of chronic diseases, including Type 2 diabetes, stroke, coronary heart disease and [colorectal cancer](#), according to a recent study published in [The Lancet](#).

The lingo and various definitions of carbs may be adding to the confusion. People often have trouble understanding terms like refined and unrefined grains, as well as the various types of sugars.

- Refined grains are stripped of the fiber- and nutrient-rich bran and germ during processing.
- Unrefined grains contain all of the healthy components of the grain and are, therefore, rich in fiber, magnesium, vitamin E and other nutrients.
- Some sugars — fructose in fruit sugar, for example — are healthy. Others (the added sugar found in sucrose, table sugar) are not.

So for many people, ditching the carbs altogether seems easier.



The difference between slow and fast carbs

I recently ran across the terms slow carbs and fast carbs, which may help us understand which carbs to embrace. Slow carbs, which are found in fruits, vegetables and whole grains, are rich in fiber and, therefore, take longer to digest and cause a slower rise in blood sugar. These fiber-rich slow carbs also prevent us from feeling hungry an hour after eating.

Fast carbs, on the other hand, found in refined white bread and baked goods with added sugar, are devoid of fiber and other healthy nutrients, and, as their name implies, cause a rapid rise in blood sugar and leave us feeling hungry shortly after we've eaten. I suggest you embrace the slow carbs while skipping the fast carbs.

As I write in my book, "[Finally Full, Finally Slim](#)," get over your fear of carbs to lead a healthier life. If carbs have ever been related to weight gain, it's because we eat too much of the wrong kinds.

Let's apply some visual wisdom to a healthy plate:

- Fill half the plate with generous portions of vegetables and fruits.
- Fill a quarter with healthy protein such as fish, chicken or beans.
- Fill the last quarter with healthy starch such as sweet potato, brown rice or quinoa.

Enjoy these slow carbs, which can help you feel satisfied and healthy.

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