

CARBOHYDRATES... EXPLAINED

SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES (AKA SUGAR)

There are many types of sugar, but the two main ones in our diet are glucose and fructose. These are known as single sugars, and they combine with each other to create double sugars, such as sucrose (better known as table sugar). Typically, most foods with sugar contain a combination of glucose and fructose. This is true whether you're eating an apple or drinking a soda.

- **Glucose:** This is your body's primary energy source. It's also the "sugar" in blood sugar. And because it's already in the form your body needs, it's quickly absorbed into your blood. As a result, glucose is the type of carbohydrate that raises blood sugar the fastest.

- **Fructose:** Unlike glucose, fructose doesn't spike blood sugar. That's because to use fructose, your body must first send it from your intestines to your liver. From there, your body converts it to glucose and stores it. However, if your liver glucose stores are already full, then the fructose is converted to fat. This is why an excess can lead to weight gain, even though it has little impact on blood sugar.

COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES

The definition of these is simple: any carbohydrate that's composed of more than two sugar molecules.

- **Starch:** This is the stored form of glucose in plant foods. There's an abundance of starch in grains, legumes, and root vegetables, such as potatoes. Essentially, starch is a bunch of glucose molecules that are held together by a weak chemical bond. So when you eat it, it breaks down easily, and you're left with pure glucose. The upshot: It raises blood sugar quickly when eaten without fat or fiber.

- **Fiber:** Also called a nondigestible carbohydrate, fiber is the structural material in the leaves, stems, and roots of plants. So it's found in vegetables, fruits, and grains. Fiber is composed of bundles of sugar molecules, but unlike starch, it has no effect on blood sugar. That's because human digestive enzymes can't break the bonds that hold those bundles together. What's more, fiber slows the absorption of starch into your bloodstream and is thought to help you feel full longer after a meal.

So how much starch can you eat? It depends. As a general

HOW SUGAR HIDES

Scanning a product's ingredients list to see if it contains sugar is smart—but you may need to expand your vocabulary. Here are 20 aliases that the sweet stuff goes by—none of which include the word *sugar*.

- Glucose
- Barley malt
- Brown rice syrup
- Corn syrup
- Dextrose
- Evaporated cane juice invert syrup
- Fructose
- Fruit juice
- Galactose
- Glucose
- Granular fruit grape juice concentrate
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Lactose
- Maltodextrin
- Maple syrup
- Molasses
- Organic cane juice
- Sorghum
- Sucrose
- Turbinado