

# Carbohydrate Myth Busting

## Quality carbohydrates in a balanced diet

### FACT SHEET


#### Carbohydrates and weight loss myth busting

Myth	Fact
Carbohydrates are fattening	Carbohydrates alone do not cause weight gain – they have the same energy value as protein and only half as much as fat. It's the total amount of energy (kilojoules or calories) you eat that counts.
Avoid all carbohydrate foods at night	There is no solid evidence to back up an evening ban on bread, pasta and rice. <sup>2</sup> In fact a recent study suggests that eating carbohydrates at dinner might have an advantage for weight loss. <sup>3</sup>
Higher protein weight loss diets, mean avoiding all carbohydrate foods	Research shows that higher protein weight loss diets have short term advantages for weight loss. However, effective higher protein diets still contain moderate amounts of carbohydrate foods including grain foods and legumes. <sup>4</sup> For more information on grain foods and weight loss visit <a href="http://www.glnc.org.au/grainsthewholestory">www.glnc.org.au/grainsthewholestory</a>

#### It's all about choosing quality carbohydrates

There's a new way to measure carbohydrates and it's called 'carbohydrate quality'. People used to describe carbohydrates as 'simple vs complex' or 'sugars vs starches', while 'carbohydrate quality' aims to measure the contribution of a carbohydrate food towards a balanced diet.

By choosing good quality carbohydrate foods you will be choosing foods which deliver more nutrition for the energy they provide, giving you more bang for your buck. When considering the quality of carbohydrate foods use this check list as a guide to making healthier choices:

Choose carbohydrate foods which are:	Why this is important	Grain foods and Legumes facts 
<b>Nutrient dense</b>	Nutrient dense foods deliver a range of essential nutrients for health including vitamins and minerals.	Grain foods are a leading source of nine key nutrients in the Australian diet – fibre, folate, niacin, thiamine, iron, zinc, magnesium, protein and carbohydrates. <sup>5</sup> Legumes contain a range of nutrients including protein, fibre, B vitamins, iron, zinc, calcium and magnesium. <sup>6,7</sup>
<b>A source of fibre</b>	Fibre is essential for digestive wellbeing and promotes health in the long term.	Whole grain foods, high fibre grain foods and legumes provide a range of dietary fibres and are the best source of fibre in the Australian diet. <sup>5</sup>
<b>A source of phytonutrients</b>	Phytonutrients, including antioxidants, are protective components found in foods that help to fight off disease.	Whole grains and legumes are phytonutrient rich, in fact whole grains and vegetables are equal as antioxidant foods. <sup>8,9</sup> It's the bran layer of whole grains, which contains many of the phytonutrients. This layer is found in whole grain foods as well as high fibre grain foods. <sup>9</sup>
<b>Lower Glycemic Index (GI)</b>	Lower GI foods have a range of health benefits as they are absorbed more slowly and so cause smaller rises in blood glucose levels. <sup>10,11</sup>	Many grain foods are low GI including intact whole grains (for example rye, barley, oats, corn, quinoa, buckwheat and bulgur), breakfast cereals based on traditional oats or bran, dense whole grain and multi-grain breads, traditional sourdough bread, some varieties of white rice, pasta and some noodles. <sup>12</sup> Most legumes (beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas) are a low GI. <sup>12</sup>

#### Did you know?

Following a low carbohydrate diet in the long term is linked to a 30% increased risk of an early death.<sup>1</sup>

#### What you need to know

Carbohydrates are in many healthy foods including grain foods (whole grains, breads, breakfast cereals, rice, pasta, noodles and crispbreads), legumes (lentils, beans, peas and chickpeas), dairy, fruits and starchy vegetables. However they are also in many high kilojoule foods that contain very few nutrients such as confectionery, chips, cakes, pastries, soft drinks, honey and added sugar.

We need carbohydrate foods everyday as they fuel our body and our brain. With such a wide range of foods containing carbohydrates it is important that we choose good quality carbohydrate foods every day. This will help to ensure we are getting adequate energy-giving carbohydrates to keep us going, while also obtaining a range of other nutrients needed for health and wellbeing.



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Choosing quality carbohydrate foods is as easy as eating legumes more often and enjoying grain foods each day, with preference to whole grain, high fibre and lower GI grain foods as part of a balanced diet.

*Tip: To lower the overall GI of your diet aim to eat at least one low GI carbohydrate food at each meal and base snacks on low GI foods.*

## How much do I need?

The actual amount of carbohydrate required each day varies depending on factors like body size, activity level, age and gender. Instead of focusing on the amount of carbohydrates we need, the Australian Dietary Guidelines outlines the number of serves of good quality carbohydrate foods we need each day, such as grain foods, legumes, dairy, fruit and vegetables. This guide is available online [www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au).<sup>13</sup>

Based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines, the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council™ has developed a simple message that all Australians should aim to **enjoy grain foods 3-4 times each day, choosing at least half as whole grain or high fibre grain foods.**

In the case of legumes, the majority of Australians are not eating enough of these super nutritious foods and so we should **aim to eat legumes at least 2-3 times each week.**

## Putting it all together portion guide

Here's an example of how an adult can enjoy the recommended number of serves of good quality carbohydrate foods in a day. Use the portion sizes here as a guide.



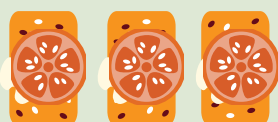
### BREAKFAST

¾ cup high fibre breakfast cereal with skim milk and strawberries



### AFTERNOON TEA

Small handful of unsalted nuts (30g)



### MORNING TEA

3 whole grain crispbreads with reduced fat cheese and tomato

**DINNER**  
Minestrone soup with wholemeal pasta and red kidney beans, served with a slice of whole grain bread or traditional low GI sourdough - See featured image, recipe available online at [www.glnc.org.au](http://www.glnc.org.au)



### SNACK

¾ cup of low fat yoghurt



### LUNCH

Chicken wrap: whole grain flat bread with chicken breast and salad filling including ¼ of an avocado, carrot, lettuce, etc. Plus an apple.

Check out some quick and easy recipes like Quinoa and Wheat Berry Tabouleh or Beetroot Hummus at [www.glnc.org.au](http://www.glnc.org.au)



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Visit [www.glnc.org.au](http://www.glnc.org.au) to download recipes, fact sheets and subscribe to GLNC's e-newsletter to learn more about the benefits of grains and legumes. | For all references cited go to [www.glnc.org.au/resources/fact-sheet-references](http://www.glnc.org.au/resources/fact-sheet-references).

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