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Integrative Advantage

Simple Vs. Complex Carbohydrates

Simple carbs are sugars. While some of these occur naturally in products that we may not think contain carbs, like milk, most of the simple carbs in the American diet are added to foods. It is very important to check the label on the foods you consume to check for added sugars and avoid products that contain them.

Common simple carbs added to foods include:

- raw sugar
- brown sugar
- corn syrup and high-fructose corn syrup
- glucose, fructose, and sucrose
- fruit juice concentrate

Common foods that contain simple carbs include:

- soda, sports drinks, and fruit juices
- baked goods and prepackaged cookies
- breakfast cereal and prepackaged oatmeal
- candy
- premade sauces
- white flour
- degermed cornmeal
- white bread
- white rice
- alcoholic beverages

Fiber and starch are the two types of complex carbohydrates. Fiber is especially important because it promotes bowel regularity and helps to control cholesterol. Starch is also found in some of the same foods as fiber. The difference is certain foods are considered more starchy than fibrous, such as potatoes. Complex carbohydrates are key to long-term health. They make it easier to maintain a healthy weight and can even help guard against type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular problems in the future.

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Good sources of complex carbohydrates are:

- 100% whole wheat bread (not multigrain- this often has less fiber and more added sugar)
- brown rice
- barley
- buckwheat
- bulgur wheat
- oats
- wild rice
- spelt
- corn
- peas
- potatoes
- rice

The main sources of dietary fiber include:

- Fruits- apples, bananas, oranges, strawberries, raspberries
- Vegetables- carrots, beets, broccoli, artichokes, leafy greens (not iceberg lettuce)
- nuts
- beans
- 100% whole grains