Choosing the Most Nutritious Carbs

K-STATE Research and Extension
Kansas State University

Here are a few examples to help you choose nutrient dense, low-calorie carbohydrates *more* often and eat *fewer* refined, high-calorie carbohydrates.

Examples of Carb Choices to Use More Often

Foods that are high in essential nutrients and fiber, and that do not contain added sugars.

Fresh Fruits:

Bananas	Cranberries
Cantaloupe	Strawberries
Nectarines	Blueberries
Oranges	Apricots, Peaches
Watermelon	Plums

Certain Dairy Products: Milk, Plain Yogurt

Vegetables (non-starchy):
High in fiber and low in carbs.

Summer Squash	Radishes
Leafy greens	Carrots
Cauliflower	Peppers
Tomatoes	Cabbage
Green beans	Broccoli

Vegetables (starchy):
Higher in carbs, but also high in fiber and essential vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

Cooked Dry Beans	Corn
Sweet Potatoes (Yams)	White potatoes
Winter Squash	Peas

Whole Grains:
High in fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

Brown Rice	Bulgur
Whole wheat pasta	Rolled Oats
Whole wheat bread	Barley
High-fiber ready-to-eat cereals	

Examples of Carb Choices to Use Occasionally

Foods without much fiber, and containing primarily refined flours and added sugar.

Bagels	Pie
Muffins	Cake
Cookies	Doughnuts
White Pasta	Most Crackers
White Bread, Rolls	White Rice
White Tortillas	Many ready-to-eat cereals
Pretzels	

Nutrient Dense/High Carb Foods:
While considered healthy, these foods are high in carbs for the portion size.

Dried fruit
100% Fruit Juices

Sweetened Foods:
Sweets are carb dense and usually contain little or no fiber.

Juice drinks with added sugar
Canned or frozen fruits with added sugar
Sweetened custard-style yogurt

Foods with Refined Sugars and Starch:
Foods and beverages containing little or no fiber or other beneficial nutrients.

Beer/Wine Drinks	Candy
Regular soda pop	Syrup
Jelly and honey	Potato chips

This handout is meant only to serve as a guide. Be sure to read Nutrition Facts labels on foods and beverages. Take note of serving sizes and use care when selecting your portion size.

Kansas State University is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Information compiled by Julene DeRouchey, Pottawatomie County Extension Agent, and Mary Meck Higgins, Ph.D., R.D., CDE, Assistant Professor, Human Nutrition, K-State Research & Extension, Manhattan, KS.

Revised February 2005. For more information on healthy eating, contact your local extension office.