

BIKINI BODY

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BEGINS A NEW SERIES
ON ACHIEVING THE
PERFECT FEMALE FORM
BY ASKING:
CARBS OR NO CARBS?



There are three main groups of carbohydrate:

1. SIMPLE

Simple carbohydrates are broken down quickly, resulting in a fast release of insulin. They often include sucrose (table sugars, sweets etc), lactose (milk sugar) or fructose (fruit sugar). Simple carbohydrate should be limited but natural fruits are rich in vitamins and fibre and therefore should not be eliminated completely.

2. COMPLEX

Complex carbohydrates, also known as starchy carbs, can be divided into two groups: refined and unrefined. Refined carbohydrates are processed carbohydrates, which generally means the natural fibre and nutrients have been removed and sugar has been added. These carbohydrates include white bread, white pasta, cakes, and biscuits and should not form part of a daily diet.

Refined carbohydrates, however, still contain much of their natural goodness, and provide the body with slow-release energy. Examples include brown rice, oats and sweet potatoes. They should be eaten in small, regular quantities throughout the daytime.

3. FIBROUS

Fibrous carbs include green and leafy vegetables. They are often low in calories and should be consumed frequently. Within this group there are soluble and insoluble fibres, both of which are essential for digestive transit. It is important to consume enough fibre to prevent toxins building up in the colon and to add bulk to food to help it pass through the digestive system.

The glycaemic index, which refers to the rate at which food is converted into sugar in the blood stream, also needs to be considered. However, it does not take into the account the amount of food consumed. The glycaemic load does, and is therefore a better way of measuring the conversion of food into sugar. Meals with a lower glycemic load release energy more slowly and are therefore more helpful in terms of insulin and weight management.

THE BEST TIMES TO EAT CARBOHYDRATES

When you eat carbohydrates your digestive system breaks them down into glucose, which enters the blood stream. Your pancreas then releases insulin in response to rising blood sugar levels, which enables the glucose to be used for energy. If the glucose is not used for energy it gets stored as fat.

Eating little and often means your body's internal environment remains stable and you are able to burn any energy taken in, which results in less stored fat. Larger meals result in a larger insulin spike and more glucose gets burned or stored.

So start by separating your three main meals into six smaller meals. Have small amounts of carbohydrates with meals one, two, three and four and stop eating starch-based carbohydrates early evening. By doing this carbohydrates will be burned throughout the day and avoided at night, when we tend to be less active.

HOW MANY CARBOHYDRATES ARE TOO MUCH?

Many mainstream health practitioners advocate a healthy diet consisting of 50% to 75% carbohydrates. However, for the majority of people who lead sedentary lifestyles this often provides too much energy to be burned off. Consequently their bodies have excess glucose that gets stored as fat.

Forty per cent carbohydrates seems like a more realistic figure for someone wanting to reduce body fat and add some lean tissue. Your total daily calorie intake should be dependent on your metabolism and energy output: if you consume too few calories you will struggle to get the right essential nutrients so it is better to take daily exercise than cut your calories too much.

The American Medical Association recommends an hour of moderate exercise a day to stay slim. There is some argument about the most effective form of fat-burning but there is a considerable body of evidence that suggests aerobic exercise alone is not

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as effective as aerobic exercise combined with resistance training. In my view, the hour a day guideline should therefore include both.

THE KEY TO A BIKINI BODY

Diet is essential but this does not mean being on a starvation diet. It means feeding your body with the right foods to give it the fuel it needs to train hard:

eating little and often and exercising regularly. Looking good does not mean depriving your body of the food it needs. Most restrictive diets only trigger cravings and because they lack vitamins and minerals can damage skin and hair.

Bikini and fitness competitors should strive to be fit, not unhealthy, so go ahead and enjoy your carbohydrates —just don't have too many!