

## BE WELL

### Chew on this ... Don't Ditch the Carbs!

By Debbie DeAngelo  
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If the thought of eating a slice of bread makes you break into a cold sweat, then perhaps it's time to think of carbs differently.

I'm not sure when our diet turned into a science project, but eating has evolved into that approach for many people. As a kid, I don't ever remember my parents, grandparents, or anyone for that matter, sitting down to a meal and declaring that they couldn't consume potatoes, pasta or rice because it was "bad" for them.

Carbs seem to be the current culinary villain. But not all carbs are created equal – or contribute to an expanding waistline.

Carbs derived from refined flour (non-whole grains that are quickly digested and leave you feeling hungry sooner), sweets and processed foods should be consumed infrequently. However, carbs originating from starchy vegetables, fruits, legumes, and whole grains are actually good for you. In part, this is due to an ingredient known as resistant starch.

Resistant starch is so named because they are carbs that resist digestion in the small intestines. Since they aren't fully absorbed, they serve as a type of slow fermenting fiber in the large intestines, which in turn feed the healthy bacteria, also known as probiotics, in the colon. Foods high in these substances are very nutritious and provide a multitude of vitamins and minerals.

Emerging evidence suggests that resistant starches aid in weight management and blood sugar control too. In a small 2015 study published in the Nutrition Journal, researchers prepared four different types of pancakes for the 70 women enrolled to determine the effects on the body. Pancakes were made from ordinary starch, ordinary starch and whey protein, resistant starch, and resistant starch with whey protein. Compared to the other three pancake types, those made with resistant starch and whey protein resulted in more efficient fat burning and a higher degree of satiety in both lean and overweight women. Not only did this study demonstrate how the two types of starch differed but that balancing the food groups is equally important.

While there is not yet a specific recommendation for the amount of resistant starch to strive for each day, nutrition experts agree that we should eat these food sources daily, preferably with each meal. Here are three ways to enjoy carbs wisely and increase your intake of resistant starch.

### **Go Bananas ... green ones!**

All bananas have some resistant starch but green ones have up to 80 percent more. This popular under-ripened fruit also contains less sugar and more fiber than their yellow counterparts, which is why they taste less sweet but are more filling. Slice a banana lengthwise, spread Greek yogurt down the middle and top with berries for a tasty breakfast banana split. You can also purchase banana flour to use in your baked goods.

### **Cool Down the Carbs**

As a rule of thumb, starchy foods have more resistant starch in their raw state versus their cooked state. Cooking breaks down the carbs, so they are more easily digested. When the cooked carbs cool down, they return to their less digestible form. Take advantage of the benefits of this cooling process by eating cold pasta and potato salads instead of always eating them as a warm dish. Another tip is to cook your pasta al dente, which is firm to the bite. Overcooked pasta has less resistant starch. Rice lovers can steam brown or black rice, chill it, and use it to make a grain bowl or add to scrambled eggs.

### **Fill up on Fiber**

Most Americans don't get the recommended 30 to 35 grams of fiber each day. By simply making some different choices, you can easily obtain 10 to 12 grams per three meals. As an added bonus, many of these foods naturally contain resistant starches, so they are satiating. Simple substitutions include choosing steel cut oats instead of processed ones, selecting breads that list a whole grain as the first ingredient, adding a variety of legumes (i.e., black or pinto beans) to your meals

and cooking quinoa or barley as a side dish (remember that eating them cold boosts levels of resistant starch).

Carbs can and should be part of a nutritious diet. When balanced with protein and healthy fat at a meal, it's the perfect combination for physical and mental functioning ... not to mention how happy you'll be making your stomach!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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