

“Low carb” has replaced “low fat” as the latest diet craze. Limiting certain carbohydrates can be beneficial and, for that matter, so can a low fat diet. Yet, many of us going “low fat” ended up gaining weight by stretching the limits, eating low fat foods but not paying attention to the number of calories we were eating. Try not to make a similar mistake when going “low carb”. Carbohydrates actually contain nutrients which the body needs. It’s our *choice* of carbohydrates that is at issue. The best advice is to choose *good* carbs over *bad*. Good carbs are whole, unprocessed foods high in fiber, while bad carbs are just the opposite.

The glycemic index system is one helpful way to determine the good from the bad. This system ranks carbohydrates based on the effect they have on blood sugar. Some carbohydrates, for example, white bread, turn into sugar quickly and are rated as a high glycemic index (GI) food while others, like peaches, are converted into sugar over a longer time and are rated as a low GI food. Why is this important? Sugar stimulates our bodies to produce insulin which immediately does its job by carrying sugar to the body’s cells for energy. Insulin then helps the body to store the unused sugar as fat, unless the body burns up the carbohydrate calories with activity and exercise. A low carbohydrate diet will keep the blood sugar stable, keep insulin production low, reduce fat and encourage weight loss.

Carbohydrates which are high in fiber are generally *good* carbs. Fiber takes longer to digest, does not raise blood sugar level, gives food its bulk and aids in digestion. Often the foods highest in fiber, are also the ones that have a lower GI rating.

Not all carbohydrates are equal. The good carbs contain essential nutrients. Avoid the processed, concentrated sweets in cookies, candy and cake and reach for the wholeness of unprocessed carbs like broccoli, berries, and melons.

To learn more about the glycemic index system and low carbohydrate diets, check out nutrition related books and articles at the library, bookstores or, on the web. Question/concerns? Contact me at [vclarcq@tiac.com](mailto:vclarcq@tiac.com)