

Identifying Refined Carbohydrates

Refined carbohydrates are forms of sugars and starches that do not exist in nature. They have been processed, extracted, concentrated, purified or transformed enzymatically from natural whole foods. The extent of processing can vary from minimal (cracked and stone-ground grains) all the way to fine powders, flours and starches. With processing the outer bran coating is lost and with it fibre and many nutrients. The net result is that refined grains are easily and rapidly digested, converted into sugars and absorbed into the bloodstream and resulting in the release of insulin to maintain controlled blood sugar levels.

What’s the difference between whole food carbs and refined carbs?

Refined Carbohydrate	Whole Food Carbohydrate
Comes in a package and/or has an ingredient list (eg. corn flakes,	Has no ingredient list or packaging (or has one single ingredient listed on the package- eg. “quinoa”)
Has been made with white or whole wheat flour	Would need to be processed in some way to become flour
Does not grow on a tree, in a greenhouse or in a field (eg. muffins don’t grow on trees)	Grows on a tree, in a greenhouse or in a field (eg. apple trees)
You feel sleepy or sluggish after eating it (it makes you “crash”)	You feel energized and satisfied after eating it
<p>Examples: Bread, pastries, packaged cereal, pasta, cookies, corn/potato chips, white rice, bagels, wraps, naan bread, hamburger buns, doughnuts, muffins</p> 	<p>Examples: Fruit, vegetables, quinoa, brown rice, steel cut oats, lentils, beans</p> 

Identifying Added Sugars

Added sugar hides in many common foods and can lead to blood sugar imbalances as well as weight gain and inflammation. Just like refined carbs, refined sugar enters the bloodstream very quickly, and can cause spikes and dips in blood sugar levels throughout the day. Real foods that contain natural sugar, like fruit, are preferable to “food products” with added sugar because they come in a whole package with fibre, vitamins and beneficial nutrients.

Tips for how to avoid added sugar:

- Check labels for **added sugar** on common foods:
 - Pasta sauces, sports drinks, salad dressings, fruit snacks, soups, yogurt, juice, nut butter, cereal, granola, jam, bbq sauce, granola bars, dried fruit, coffee creamers, non-dairy milk, tonic/flavoured water
- Know the common names for added sugar on food labels:
 - brown sugar, cane crystals, cane sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, crystal dextrose, evaporated cane juice, fructose sweetener, fruit juice concentrates, high-fructose corn syrup, HFCS, honey, liquid fructose, malt syrup, maple syrup, molasses, raw sugar, sugar, syrup and white sugar
- Use **small amounts** of whole food sweeteners in baking, to sweeten beverages or as an occasional treat
 - Applesauce, mashed bananas, raw (unpasteurized) honey, dates, unsweetened dried fruit, organic stevia drops or powder (with no other ingredients listed on the label), coconut nectar, coconut sugar, 100% pure maple syrup
- Eat fruit as a substitute for sweets with added sugar
 - Make fruit salad to have on hand when a sweet craving strikes
 - Try frozen mangoes, grapes or berries to snack on
 - Enjoy what is in season and locally grown
- Note: do not substitute added sugar for artificial sweeteners, as these can have negative health impacts and are not real, whole foods

Exercise #1: Investigate Your Kitchen

- Go through your pantry and thoroughly read the ingredient labels on all packaged foods (crackers, cereals, pasta, canned/jarred food, etc).
- Scrutinize every sauce/dressing/dip/condiment hiding in your fridge. Don't forget to read labels on beverages, yogurts, coffee creamers, etc. as well.
- Tackle the freezer: are there any added sugars or refined carbs lurking in convenience foods or sweets in there?
- Resist the urge to “use up” processed food products. Prioritize your health and let them go. If you live with other people who aren't ready to give up refined carbs and added sugar, don't throw away food without their consent. *This exercise is useful even if you can't remove all processed foods from your kitchen. Achieving awareness of the food products in your environment is an important step.*
- Think about your next steps: What kind of substitutes will you introduce? What will your next grocery trip look like? How can you set up your kitchen for healthy cooking?



Exercise #2: Investigate Your Diet

Step One: Collect Data

- Keep a diet diary for five days. Write down everything you ate or drank, with as much specificity as possible. You can use a document on your computer, or fill out the attached diet diary template. Include at least one weekend day.

Step Two: Analyze

- Go back through your diet diary, highlighting all refined carbohydrates in **yellow**, and all added sugar in **green**.

Step Three: Reflect

- What were the most common sources of refined carbohydrates?

- What were the most common sources of added sugar?

- Did anything surprise you about your week of eating?

- Can you identify any “triggers” that often led you to eat refined carbs and sugar? Eg. Routinely eating toast for breakfast when you didn’t sleep well the night before, routinely drinking sugary beverages when socializing, etc.

- What kinds of substitutions or changes in routine could you make to reduce your intake of refined carbs and added sugar?

5 DAY DIET DIARY

Complete the following diet diary to the best of your ability. Be specific- include snacks, beverages (except water) and even things like chewing gum. Do your best to also indicate the time of day that you ate or drank. (Eg: 11am: 2 eggs with spinach and avocado, 1.5 mugs black coffee.)

NAME:					
WEEK OF:					
	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
MORNING					
MID-DAY					
EVENING					
NIGHTTIME					