

CLEANING UP YOUR CARBS

In a diet-obsessed society, carbohydrate-rich foods have been getting a bad rap. Yet not all carbs are evil and some are vital for the prevention of chronic disease.

health benefits of good carbs

Wholegrains can help you shrink belly fat; they promote the growth of good bacteria in your gut, which will protect you against cancer; and they lower insulin resistance in your body, which will help you to avoid type 2 diabetes. These wholesome foods supply longer-lasting energy to your muscles and they are a good fuel source for your brain, which prefers to run on carbs rather than proteins or fats.

Unlike refined grain foods (finely milled flour, white bread and biscuits), wholegrains retain their bran and germ, so they are filled with fibre, antioxidants and anti-inflammatory phytonutrients. And when they are used whole or cracked (rather than as smooth flour), they generally have a low glycemic index (GI).

which ones to enjoy

The latest research shows that different wholegrains have different effects, so it's important to get a variety. Ditch the white stuff and learn to use unrefined or minimally processed grains in your kitchen, just as nature intended.

While whole-wheat, barley, bulgur

and freekeh have ancient origins, they may be new to modern palates. And if you're gluten intolerant, buckwheat or kasha; quinoa; millet; brown, red and wild rice; or polenta make good alternatives.

how to use them

Tenderly cooked wholegrains make a perfect pilaf to swap for your white rice and other high-GI carbs at meals. Use them also as a salad base, in soups, as breakfast cereals and to create desserts. They're more nutty and chewy and definitely more satisfying.

Cook wholegrains by boiling, using the stove-top absorption method, rice cooker or pressure cooker. Presoaking for 30–60 minutes cuts up to one-third of the cooking time. However, not soaking and using less water in cooking may produce a lower GI product, as shown in research with rice.

Add turmeric, cardamom pods, dried herbs, black eyed beans or stock for extra flavour and experiment with your own wholegrain blends. Prepared wholegrains will last as long as five days in the fridge and they freeze remarkably well for months.



Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.