

### Questions:

1. Do you eat crackers by themselves?
2. Which cereal, if any, do you eat?
3. What are your favorite treats?
4. Do you complain a lot about being hungry?

## CHOOSING HEALTHY FOODS: CARBOHYDRATES

### What is a carbohydrate?

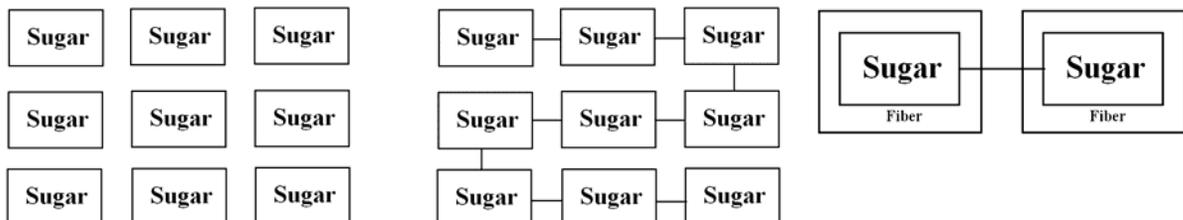
Carbohydrates are one of the basic food types your body needs for good health. There are several types of carbohydrates and they are found in everything from bread to pasta to vegetables to table sugar. Carbohydrates are your body's primary energy source and it is important to eat carbohydrates every day! The trick is to choose the right carbohydrates in the right amounts. Refer to the Food List handout for a full list of the different carbohydrate types.

**Carbohydrates are all made up of sugars, but different types of carbohydrates have different shapes and structures. Here are the main types:**

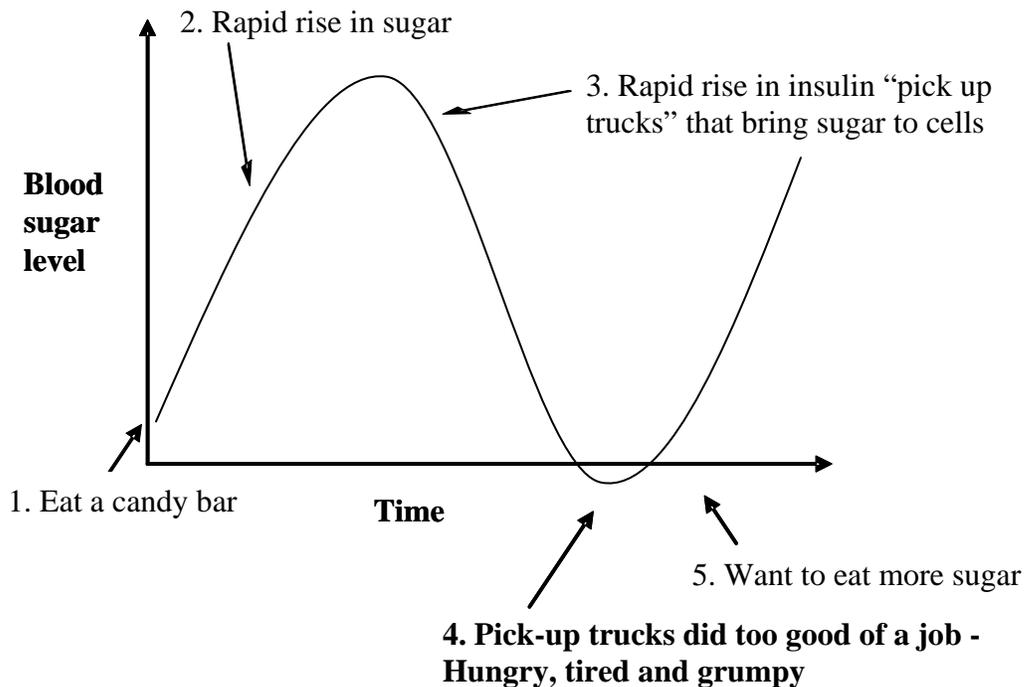
**Sugar:** Foods that taste sweet in your mouth such as cake, candy and ice cream.

**“Secret sugars”:** Foods that do not taste sweet but that quickly turn into sugar once they are in your stomach. Examples of these are white bread, rice, and crackers.

**“Sugars in a suitcase”:** Foods that do not taste sweet, but have the sugars surrounded by a “suitcase” that has to be opened before the sugars can be used by your body. Opening the suitcase slows the rate at which the sugar gets into your body, which is a good thing. This suitcase is really called fiber. Examples of these foods are whole wheat bread, brown rice and whole wheat crackers. When choosing grains, look for high fiber options.



## Sugar Rollercoaster



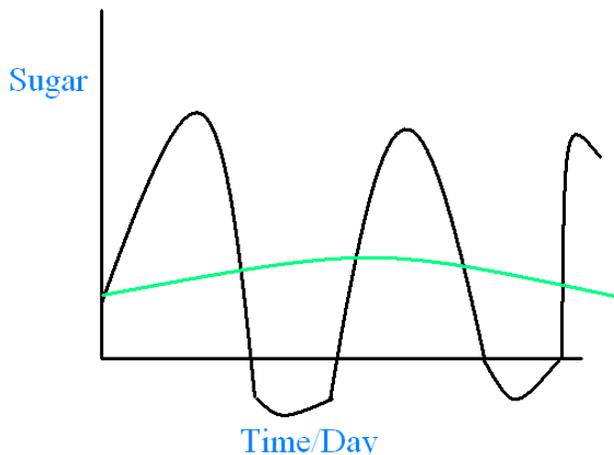
**What happens when you eat a candy bar or too many grains at one time?**

- Your body always needs and uses **a little** sugar.
- 1. However, let’s pretend that you eat lots of sugar by eating a candy bar. Your body gets a rush of sugar. You may feel a sudden, but short-lived, rush of energy.
- 2. Your body hates having too much sugar. If the sugar were left to float around in your blood, it could go and do mean things like attack our eyes, kidneys, and heart. Our body does not let that happen because we have an organ called the pancreas. The pancreas gets upset because it now has to work by making insulin. You can think of insulin as little pick-up trucks that pick up the sugar from your blood and then dump it off in cells. The pancreas tries to take care of the sugar quickly by sending out lots of the pick-up trucks and they end up picking up too much sugar, which causes low blood sugar.
- 3. Low sugars cause you to be hungry, tired and grumpy!
- 4. With your sugar low, your body craves more sugar and the rollercoaster starts all over again.

### Why is the sugar roller coaster unhealthy?

- People who eat a lot of sugar or “secret sugar” type foods are often constantly hungry. Constant hunger makes it easy to eat too many calories and to gain excess weight.
- Constant sugar spikes and crashes are hard on your pancreas and may lead to diabetes.

**Balance sugars** by just having a little sugar at any one time and by choosing carbohydrates that come “in a suitcase” (i.e., that have fiber). We can also help balance the blood sugars by eating protein, fat and/or fiber with a carbohydrate.



### Two rules of thumb for carbohydrates: VERY IMPORTANT!

1. Carbohydrates typically do not make you feel satisfied by themselves. So if you are hungry, does it make sense to go into the kitchen and only eat foods that do not make you feel satisfied? No! Make sure to always eat carbohydrates with protein or healthy fat because otherwise you might overeat.
2. If you eat too many carbohydrates at one time, you will experience the sugar roller coaster and feel hungry, tired and grumpy in about an hour. Make sure to only eat one or a maximum of two carbohydrate servings (see food list) per meal or snack.

### How to choose healthy carbohydrates?

- **Read the food labels.** When picking out carbohydrate foods, such as bread or cereal, check the labels for how much sugar and fiber they contain. Choose foods that are low in sugar and high in fiber. A good guideline for breakfast cereal is less than 8 grams of sugar and more than 4 grams of fiber per serving. Choose breads or crackers with 3 grams or more of fiber per slice or serving.
- **Know the code words.** Look for words like “whole grain” or “whole wheat”

at the beginning of the ingredient list when buying breads and pastas. If bread is described as “wheat” without the word “whole,” it is probably not a healthy carbohydrate. Carbohydrates described as “refined,” “processed,” or “white” are often less healthy choices.

- **Vegetables, beans, and fruits with edible peel** are good sources of slowly absorbable carbohydrates or sugars that your body prefers. These carbohydrates are okay to eat by themselves.
- **Get back to the source.** In general, the closer a carbohydrate is to its original form of when it was grown, the healthier it will be. Highly processed foods (like white bread or white rice) are less healthy than their whole grain counterparts.
- **Use a cheat sheet!** Follow the guidelines on the “Healthy Food Choices” handouts.

### My new goals...

Now that I know this information, what am I ready and willing to change in my day to make me healthier? (Add these goals to your Goal Sheet.)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

