



## Prevail Over Processed Carbs

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Ashley Bailey, MS, RDN, LDN

The typical American diet is inundated with highly processed carbohydrates. We have a bagel made from white flour and sugar for breakfast, a sandwich on white bread for lunch, potato chips for snack, white pasta with dinner, cake and ice cream for dessert...I could go on and on.

### Carbohydrates are Not Created Equally

All carbohydrates provide energy in the form of glucose, but the rate at which they are digested and utilized by the body varies greatly.

Nutrient dense, unrefined carbohydrates are:

- Sugar and starches that exist in nature (whole fruits and vegetables, beans, intact grains, etc) and have not been processed or refined
- Naturally high in fiber (helps regulate glucose and insulin levels and keep you fuller longer)
- Full of vitamins, minerals, and protein

Processed carbohydrates, otherwise known as refined carbohydrates, are:

- Sugar and starches that do not exist in nature and have been altered in some way through processing techniques to “refine” them
- Low in fiber
- Low in vitamins, minerals and protein
- Considered “empty” calories due to low nutrient content

The more a carbohydrate is processed, the less fiber and nutrients it contains. When eaten in excess, processed carbs can wreak havoc on our blood sugar, insulin and energy levels (just like sugar does!).

These foods are digested very quickly, resulting in a rapid spike (and equally rapid crash) in blood glucose levels. These glucose swings can contribute to overeating, unwanted weight gain, irritability, mood swings, etc.

### Where Do You Find Processed Carbs?

Almost everywhere! Most foods that come in a package will likely contain processed carbohydrates (of course, there are some exceptions but you’ll have to look a little harder to find these gems).

Processed carbs include white flour, white rice, processed potato or corn products and anything made from these ingredients (breads, crackers, cereals, pretzels, pasta, tortillas, chips, etc). And don’t forget candies, sweets, and sodas!

### What to Look For

Many foods with healthy sounding names are in fact highly processed with little nutritional value. Take a closer look at that “multi-grain” bread or cereal “made with whole grains.”

Make sure to look for the word **“whole”** before any flour ingredient on the ingredients list (ex. whole wheat flour versus wheat flour) to ensure you’re getting the full nutritional value of the unrefined, intact grain.

This table from the [Whole Grains Council](#) is a great guide to help get you started.

### Choose Nutrient Dense Carbs Instead

Our great-great grandparents knew what potatoes were but they probably would’ve been a little leery of potato chips, tater tots or potato flakes in a box (and rightly so!). Give these nutrient dense carbohydrates a try:

- Intact grains: quinoa, brown rice, millet, wheat berries, spelt berries, amaranth, kaniwa
- Steel cut oats, rolled oats and other 100% whole grain cereals
- Products made from 100% whole grain flours (breads, pasta, etc---[no sugar added of course!](#))
- Whole potatoes, any type, with skin (not fried)
- Whole corn, corn on the cob, corn kernels
- Beans and lentils
- [Winter squash](#) (butternut, acorn, etc)
- Whole fruit (limit to 2 servings per day)
- Unsweetened dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese)

**3 Simple Swaps for PROCESSED CARBS**

**Sources:**  
White flour, white rice, processed potato products and anything made from these ingredients (breads, crackers, cereals, pretzels, pasta, tortillas, chips, baked goods, etc)

**What Are They?**  
Processed (or refined) carbs are sugars and starches that don't exist in nature and have been altered by processing to "refine" them (i.e. stripped of fiber and nutrients)

**1 SWAP**  
White Bread for 100% Whole Wheat Bread

**2 SWAP**  
Donuts for Steel Cut Oatmeal

**3 SWAP**  
Potato Chips for Roasted Kale "Chips"

Choose to get your carbs from **nutrient dense, whole foods** instead of processed or refined foods!