

11 Clues You're Eating Too Many Carbs

by Dr. Frank Lipman via MindBodyGreen.com

Although, it's quite debatable whether carbohydrates are essential for human nutrition, for most people, they're the fuel their body runs on. For some folks, going on an extreme low-carb or no-carb diet causes them to have barely enough energy to hoist a coffee cup in the morning. At the opposite end of the scale, the folks who over-do it on carbs, even the good ones, end up having a negative impact on things like mood, weight, energy, digestion, immunity and more.

I would say most people (but not all) seem to eat more carbs than their metabolism can handle.

To start the process of listening to and interpreting what your body really needs, take this simple Carb Quiz, answering "yes" or "no" to each one, and track your responses:

1. Do you gain weight easily when your diet includes a lot of "healthy" carbs such as whole grains, legumes, fresh fruit?
2. Do you feel tired or sleepy shortly after consuming carbohydrates?
3. Do you feel foggy-headed after meals?
4. Do you frequently crave sweets?
5. Do you frequently crave starchy foods?
6. Do you have a difficult time controlling how much sugar or carbs you eat?
7. Does your weight fluctuate easily?
8. Do you have dramatic energy ups and downs throughout the day?
9. Do you feel light-headed or irritable when you're hungry?
10. Do you tend to gain weight in your face and around your abdomen, more so than on your hips and thighs?
11. Do you turn to sweets or carbs when you're feeling anxious, tired, or depressed?

If you answered "yes" to three or more of these questions, you may be eating more carbs than your system can handle or process efficiently.

To combat the negative effects, your first order of business is to cut out the sweet and starchy "white" and refined foods. If you've already done that, take it a step further. Try cutting back or avoiding all grains, including whole grains, legumes, as well as high-sugar fresh fruits. If you must have a treat, a small daily amount of low-sugar berries like blueberries may be okay for you — but you'll have to monitor how your body reacts to know for sure.

Next, you'll need to experiment a bit to find the right amount of carbs for your body, and to find out how your life circumstances affect your ability to tolerate carbs. Stress, sleep, exercise, and other factors can all affect your tolerance, so you'll need to find your individual balance and tipping points.

For example, you may be able to enjoy oatmeal and bananas for a relaxed Sunday brunch but need to avoid them on high-stress workdays. Perhaps you can manage sweet potatoes for dinner on a day when you've had good sleep but might feel better if you switch to broccoli or cauliflower after a sleepless night of dealing with a colicky baby. By tuning into how carbs are interacting with what's going on in your life, you'll be able to zero in on the carb balance that makes you feel energetic, calm and craving-free. If you don't have the bandwidth initially to closely monitor how carbs are effecting you every time you eat them, then you may find it simpler — or perhaps necessary — to cut out high-carb foods altogether for two weeks and see how you feel.

So, are you ready to take on the carb monster? Here are ways to rise to the challenge:

Start fresh. Cut out all sugars and grains for two weeks, including brown rice, corn, oats, and even quinoa. Let your grain-free experience help guide you towards finding the right carb level for you.

Eat more green leafy vegetables and healthy fats. These foods will fill you up while providing you with vital nutrients. You'll have a better chance of finding your healthiest level of grains if you're also getting enough other types of food.