

A low-carbohydrate diet is defined as consuming less than 130g of carbs per day.

Carbohydrates provide energy by breaking down into glucose, which enters the bloodstream. Insulin, a hormone from the pancreas, lowers blood glucose by allowing cells to use glucose for energy.

Healthy sources of carbohydrate include high-fibre foods, vegetables, fruits, and legumes also supply key nutrients like calcium, iron, and B vitamins. A low-carb diet can aid weight loss and improve metabolic health.



Types of carbohydrate



Starchy carbohydrates

Includes potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, cous cous, plantain, fufu, breakfast cereals, oats and other grains like rye and barley.



Sugary carbohydrates

Includes honey, syrup, fruit juice, sweets, cakes and biscuits.

What can I eat?



Eggs

Are very low carb and high in protein and other nutrients.



Fish

White fish - haddock, cod.
Oily fish - salmon, mackerel & sardines.



Fruit & vegetables

Increase intake of vegetables & lower sugar fruits such as berries.



Lean meats

Skinless chicken, turkey. Pork & beef with visible fat removed.



Nuts & seeds

Provide range of vitamins, minerals and healthy fats.



Dairy

Full fat dairy - whole milk, plain yoghurts, greek yoghurt, & cheese.

What food should I avoid?



Sugar

Honey, table sugar. Foods containing added sugar - sweets, chocolates, ice cream, biscuits.



Bread, grains and pasta

Foods made from wheat, rice and barley including bread, pasta and cereal.



Processed foods

Pies, crisps, hot dogs, sausages, fast foods, pizzas & takeaways. These are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar.



Starchy vegetables

i.e. vegetables that grow under the ground - sweet potatoes, carrots, parsnips, beetroot and potatoes.



At home

- Swap rice for cauliflower, broccoli couscous, quinoa, or bulgar wheat.
- Choose high-fibre carbs like wholegrains.
- Cooking from scratch helps control carb content.
- Replace spaghetti with spirals of vegetables like courgette or butternut squash noodles.
- Use lettuce leaves instead of tortilla wraps or taco shells.
- Substitute pasta sheets in lasagna with sliced aubergine.
- Use portobello mushrooms as burger buns.
- Replace potatoes with more vegetables, celeriac mash, or butternut squash wedges.
- Opt for low-carb flours like almond or coconut for baking.
- Choose coconut or almond milk over cow's milk to reduce carbs.
- Snack on low-carb options like olives, nuts, cheese, or tomatoes.
- Replace sugary desserts with berries and cream.

Eating out

- Skip the bun with your burger.
- Swap chips or potatoes for extra veg or a side salad.
- Opt for clear spirits with diet mixers over wine or lager.
- Request sauces on the side to control sugar intake.
- For vegetarian options, choose tofu, beans, veggies, and salad.



Keep a food diary so you can monitor what you're eating – apps such as Nutracheck or MyFitnessPal are great and will let you set targets and give you a full nutritional breakdown of what you're eating.



Preparation is key so it's a good idea to plan your meals and snacks for the week. If you've got all of the ingredients you need and low carb snacks to hand then you'll find sticking to it a lot easier.

Food labels

On food labels, check the 'total grams of carbohydrate per serving' usually on the back of the food packaging.

Cal values	100ml contains	250ml contains	%GDA*	typical adult
Energy	199kJ 47kcal	500kJ 120kcal	6%	2000
Protein	0.5g	1.3g		
Carbohydrate	10.5g	26.3g	29%	
of which sugars	10.5g	26.3g		
Fat	trace	trace		
of which saturates	trace	trace		
Fibre	trace	trace		
Sodium	trace	trace		
Salt equivalent	trace	trace		

*Guideline daily amounts

Vitamins/Minerals 100ml contains (42% RDA)

BE AWARE!

Cutting carbs may cause withdrawal symptoms (headaches, fatigue, nausea, irritability) around days 2-4, but these typically fade within a week, often followed by increased energy.