

# The Carb Conundrum

## Steve Fabrizio, M.D.

There is a little play on words I use when discussing carbohydrates with new patients. I mention that there are good carbs and bad carbs. "The bad carbs end in o," I add. Puzzled faces stare back as I then proceed to count off on my fingers "nachos, Doritos®, Cheetos®, Oreos®, Fritos®....." Foods that come in shiny, poofy bags are, generally speaking, not good for your health or waistline. Still these products tend to be among the most commonly purchased items at supermarkets.

### WHERE DID THINGS GO WRONG?

Sometime amidst the nascent stages of the industrial revolution, science and industry began to create foods that outpaced our body's adaptive changes. Carbohydrates in particular were radically altered. Grains that were once ground by stone in mills were now being refined by heavy machinery to reduce production costs, ensure a uniform product and extend shelf life. The foods resultant of this processed grain tend to be

light, airy and easily digestible, but sadly devoid of nutrition.

### GROUND TO DUST...

A kernel of wheat is enveloped in a tough outer layer known as the bran layer. It is the primary source of fiber and a good source of minerals in grains but in modern refining it is the first part removed. The wheat germ is where the healthful unsaturated fats, B vitamins and antioxidants reside, but this portion is stripped as well. The remaining part of the grain is the endosperm which is primarily composed of starch. It is pulverized to dust, processed with enzymes and then bleached white. Prior to use, in foods like bread, companies will add back vitamins to meet minimum requirements in order to label their product as enriched. This euphemistic term gives a false sense of the food being as nutri-



Steve Fabrizio, M.D.



tious as the original whole grain. The requirements only address iron, thiamine, folic acid, niacin and riboflavin. There are over 30 other nutrients including vitamins, minerals and trace minerals that are not replaced!

### EMPTY CALORIES

The end products made from enriched flour tend to be the epitome of empty calories. The foods produced tend to be extremely high on the glycemic index. That is to say that they tend to raise blood sugar quickly and dramatically. The response of the body to this high blood sugar is a large surge of insulin from the pancreas. Insulin's main function is to move sugar from the blood stream to the cells. This leads to a rapid fall in blood sugar and the tired, listless, hungry feeling that often accompanies. High insulin levels are also associated with inflammation in the body and are thought to be a precursor of many disease states including atherosclerosis and obesity. Breads in particular have gone from being the staff of life to a foam-like substance that offers little nutrition beyond its calories. The medical journal "The Lancet" demonstrated in a study from the 1800's, that dogs lived less than two months on a diet of refined grain bread and indefinitely on a diet of whole grain bread. Cereals, especially children's cereals, are sorely lacking in quality nutrients despite the numerous claims on their bright boxes.

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

Knowledge regarding the foods one eats is a person's best defense from the cheap and barren food products that are so readily available.

- Work towards eating less refined carbs and adding more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Read food labels and look for products that have 100 percent whole grain.
- Watch for trick phrases such as 100 percent wheat. The word "whole" is crucial.
- Look for fiber in carbohydrate products.
- Enjoy your "got to have it" snacks but eat them less often and eat less quantity.
- Use snack bags or small bowls to help control portions of the less healthful carbs.

It's never too late  
to improve your eating habits!

For more information on diet or other weight loss concerns, Dr. Fabrizio may be reached at Premier Medical Weight Loss & Day Spa: (912) 963-2123 in Port Wentworth, Georgia or (912) 353-8188 in Savannah, Georgia.  
Web: [www.GoodBodyDoctor.com](http://www.GoodBodyDoctor.com)