

TRANSITION ZONE



For many people the thought of summer signals fad diets and carb cutting. Here, nutritionist Emma Bardwell, tells us why carbs are cool and most definitely not to be avoided.

Cutting carbohydrates from meals was once hailed as the answer to fast track weight loss. The Atkins, Dukan and South Beach diets all eschewed bread, potatoes and pasta in favour of loading up on protein sources like bacon and eggs. And so began a widespread misconception that carbs make you fat (and some pretty chronic cases of halitosis).

Now though, it seems carbohydrates are creeping back into our lives, not to mention our social media feeds. The account @girlswithgluten is a carbohydrate-worshipping poke in the eye to the ubiquitous green smoothies and kale salads that dominate Instagram. It features women the world over wolfing down pizzas and burgers; what's more, they're doing it with big, juicy, lip-smacking grins. Celebrities are getting in on the action too, with everyone from Millie Mackintosh to the uber trainer Kayla Itsines, championing the importance of a balanced diet that doesn't omit entire food groups.

Carbohydrates are quite often the first food group to go when someone wants to lose weight. Cue lots of hangry individuals lamenting their lot. However, while not all carbs are bad, there is a case for reducing refined carbs – the type that contain little nutrition for the body – as they're purely a fast release of glucose and energy. These are typically white bread, pasta, white rice and processed food such as biscuits, cakes and crisps. A much better choice is to opt for complex carbohydrate sources as they release energy slowly and are a valuable source of vitamins, minerals and fibre.

The truth about carbs:

Not all carbs are created equal

TRAIN. EAT. RECOVER. REPEAT.

TRANSITION ZONE



Carbs are an important source of fuel for your brain and body. Good (complex/starchy) carbs are: wholegrain pasta, quinoa, brown rice, sweet potatoes, wholegrain bread, oats and bulgur.

Carbs make you happy

Our brains use the glucose from carbohydrates as fuel. If you've ever been on a strict diet regime such as the Atkins, you'll know that it can be hard to concentrate and you often experience severe drops in mood. That's because carbs play an important role in transporting tryptophan (key to creating serotonin, your happy hormone) to the brain.

They keep you balanced

Carbohydrates – especially complex or starchy ones such as sweet potatoes – are a good source of energy and fibre, which help your digestive system stay healthy (keeping bowel movements regular) and maintaining steady blood sugar levels. Better still, they contain all sorts of micronutrients that help release energy from food.

Carbs can actually help you lose weight

Good carbs keep you fuller for longer, meaning you're not tempted to snack all day. While it's true high-protein diets can suppress hunger, there are concerns that in the long term this could lead to kidney problems and a deficiency in some key nutrients.

Cutting carbs is unsustainable

TRAIN. EAT. RECOVER. REPEAT.

TRANSITION ZONE



Although some people experience initial weight loss from a no-carbohydrate diet, most can't maintain it. We all know fad diets don't work. Boring as it sounds, aim for balance. If you want to lose weight: 1) look at portion control 2) follow a diet that's tailored to your unique needs 3) up your exercise so that you create a calorie deficit. Genetics and lifestyle play an important role in any weight loss plan. To find an approach that works specifically for you, talk to a registered **nutritionist or nutritional therapist**.

Emma Bardwell @eightypercentclean

TRAIN. EAT. RECOVER. REPEAT.