

# CARBOHYDRATES FOR SPORT



## Top Three Things to Know About Carbohydrates

# #1

Carbohydrates (carbs) are classified as either “simple” or “complex”.

Type of Carb	Simple/“Refined”	Complex
Food Example	Sugary drinks (soda, sports drinks, lemonade, juices, etc.); cookies, candy  White/ “enriched” flour products (breads, pastries, graham crackers, etc.)  Refined grains (instant oatmeal, white rice, corn syrup, etc.)	Whole fruits (apples, bananas, oranges, etc.)  Whole vegetables (broccoli, carrots, snap peas, etc.)  “Whole” grain products (breads, pastas, brown rice, quinoa, rolled or steel cut oats, etc.)
Characteristics	High Sugar, Low Fiber Foods	High in Vitamins & Minerals, High Fiber
When to use in sport	Limit use between meals. Certain simple carbs are appropriate within 30 minutes before and immediately after exercise; also during exercise. See the “Pre-Workout Sports Nutrition” handout for more information	Complex carbs are an athlete’s best option any time of day except when digestability due to high fiber may compromise performance (1-2 hours before exercise, depending on individual metabolism).

# #2

Carbs are directly related to athletic performance.

Carbohydrates =

Intensity  
Endurance  
Mental Focus  
Time to Exhaustion  
Muscle Recovery  
Lean Body Mass

# #3

Fuel your body as if it were a race car needing premium gas in the form of carbs.

Fuel Like A Car	Carbohydrate Stores	Body Response	Timing & Type of Carbs Needed
Fill tank before exercise	Full	High energy & low fatigue	3-4 hours before: Complex 1-2 hours before: Simple
Continue adding fuel during exercise	Decreasing but maintaining higher levels with added fuel	Prolonged endurance, mental focus, and time to fatigue	15 grams of simple carbs every 20 minutes (electrolyte drink, juice, honey, jelly beans, etc)
Avoid running on empty	Empty	“Hit the wall” exhaustion	Simple carbs to increase blood sugar quickly
Refuel after exercise	Replenished back to full	Enhance muscle recovery and energy post-exercise	0-30 minutes after: Simple 1-2 hours after: Complex

*Drug Free Sport™*