

The carbohydrates in dairy

by Lynette Louw

Carbohydrates are the best source of fuel for a person's body. Carbohydrates (or carbs as we like to call them) are like petrol for the body, and gives one a lot of energy. One can find complex carbs in foods such as wholewheat bread and brown rice. These are the best carbs.

Then there are also refined carbs that are found in foods like sweets and cakes. These carbohydrates are not healthy and they have a low nutritional value. This means that they give us very little or limited energy. Our energy levels will increase and drop very quickly and suddenly.

Bread and potatoes have complex carbs that serve as important sources of energy. Bread and potatoes eaten in the right amounts, can be very healthy for us. If we eat complex carbohydrates instead of refined carbs, our bodies will maintain its energy levels for longer periods of time.

Milk and other dairy products are also often said to make us fat. Yet our body needs dairy to build strong bones and to give us energy. Doctors recommend that we use two to three portions of dairy per day. If you are an athlete, you can use even more and up to five portions a day can be ingested.

Of all the dairy products, milk has the highest levels of carbohydrates. Full-cream milk has the highest carbohydrate content, namely 11,3 grams of carbs per cup or glass. Low-fat milk (2%) has 11,7 grams of carbs, while fat-free or skimmed milk has 11,9 grams of carbs.

Buttermilk made from skimmed milk also contains 11,7 grams of carbs. Cream contains lower levels of energy and full-cream cream will contain around 6,6 grams of carbs. "Light" cream that has less fat, contains slightly more carbs than normal cream.

Other types of milk that one should take note of are goats' milk and soy milk. Goats' milk contains 10 grams of carbs, while soy milk contains only 4 grams. So soy milk is not the best choice if you want to build up your energy levels.

Other dairy products that also contain good levels of carbs, are for example yoghurt, which can have around 8 grams of carbs. It starts out with the same high levels of carbs that milk has, but because of the fermentation processes that take place when yoghurt is made, the carb levels can drop.

But not all dairy is good for you and here are some products that are very fattening and which contain high levels of carbs due to the huge amounts of sugar that has been added to them: Evaporated milk (in a tin) contains 25,3 grams of carbs and a lot of fat! Non-fat or low-fat evaporated milk also contains a lot of carbs (29 grams) but less fat. Sweetened condensed milk contains a massive 166 grams of carbs, but also a massive amount of sugar.

So, if you need your energy to sustain you through a hard day's work or to help you perform on the sport field, it is clear that good old milk remains the easiest and best option when it comes to using dairy. 