Carbohydrates: A Diabetics Best Friend

True or False: carbohydrates are a diabetics best friend. Many folks to include people with diabetes and well-meaning medical professionals answer that statement accordingly: true! So often in the diabetes community carbohydrates are vilified. Poised are its critics ready to pounce upon carbohydrates negative attributes instead of pointing out their benefits. This article takes the lesser road to put a positive spin on a potential diabetes foe.

It’s important to note why carbohydrates have earned a bad rap. After all they do raise blood glucose levels and on the whole Americans, regardless of diabetic status, tend to eat more than what the body needs. Today’s carbohydrates are of a different animal altogether due to their highly refined nature. Processed carbohydrates require minimal metabolism by the body. When consumed, even in small amounts, they are quickly absorbed by the small intestine and immediately released at high rates into the blood stream. The liver and pancreas have the arduous task of deploying the heavy glucose load. Some glucose is dispensed as energy to the cells of the body (more so if energy is in demand by the cells) but the majority are stored immediately as fat.

So the problem with carbohydrates is that too many of them at one time raise blood glucose levels too high too rapidly. Believe it or not your brain requires carbohydrates in the form of glucose to operate smoothly. Anyone who’s ever had a high or low blood glucose level can attest that their cognitive abilities were acutely compromised. Our bodies and cells need some carbohydrates. We just need to follow a few simple keys to giving our bodies what they need.

The key to eating carbohydrates is simple: restrict processed foods. This includes processed foods of all kinds: junk foods, sweets, fast-food, Gatorade and sweet beverages, low-fiber foods and so on. If most the food you eat comes in a frozen tray, out of a box, in a bag or from the window of a fast-food joint it’s processed.

Replacing processed food with healthier food is easy and affordable! Visit a local Farmer’s Market where freshness abounds! Eating meals where plants are the main entrée is a great step in the journey of change. Fresh foods require minimal preparation or fancy kitchen equipment. Just rinse off a pint of blueberries and add to yogurt topped with granola and chopped nuts.

Another key to eating carbohydrates: follow portion sizes. Read the food label and determine what the serving size of your favorite breakfast cereal is. Then take out your bowl and fill it up with the amount you normally eat. Now measure how much cereal is really in that bowl. It might surprise you!

Eat carbohydrates, protein and fat together for a well- balanced meal. Protein and fat raise blood glucose levels differently so when combined together they help prevent blood glucose spikes and provide the body with lasting energy.

For more helpful tips on eating carbohydrates, join us this week for Better Health’s Carbohydrate Counting Class where more useful tips will be given. We meet Tuesday mornings at 8:30 am and Thursday evening at 5:30 pm. Better Health is located at 1422 Bragg Blvd. For questions call Melissa at 483-7354 x 102.