

## Carbohydrates, Fats, and Proteins

Most of the nutrients in food fall into three major categories: proteins, fats, and carbohydrates.

### Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the main source of energy that fuels our body. They are the sugars and starches found in fruit and some veggies, dairy foods and grain-based food like bread. Whole grain products are better, and they will boost your fiber intake. If a person takes in more carbohydrates than their body can use for energy or store as glycogen, the excess glucose is stored as adipose tissue (body fat).

There are two types of carbohydrates:

- **Complex carbohydrates** give longer-lasting energy. Complex carbohydrates are commonly found in whole plant foods such as green vegetables, whole grains, starchy vegetables (potatoes, sweet potatoes, and corn), beans, lentils, and peas.
- **Simple carbohydrates** give endurance athletes a boost during long events or practices. Simple carbohydrates are made of just one or two sugar molecules. Simple carbohydrates include: table sugar, brown sugar, corn syrup, honey, maple syrup, molasses, jams, fruit drinks, soft drinks, and candy.

### Fats

Fats, or lipids, are the nutrients in food that the body uses to build cell membranes, nerve tissue (like the brain), and hormones. There are two types of fats.

- **Unsaturated fats** are liquid at room temperature. Unsaturated fats are the “good fats”(fish, nuts, seeds, avocados, olive oil). They help you absorb vital vitamins. Therefore, you need them in your diet. They help regulate the hormone, testosterone, which is used to build body tissue. They enhance the flavor and texture of foods. They help satisfy hunger because they take longer to digest.
- **Saturated and Trans fats** are solid at room temperature. Saturated fats are the “bad fats.” Too much of these can cause health risks. Eating too many saturated fats can clog arteries and lead to heart disease. Excess saturated fats can lead to certain types of cancer. If not used, saturated fats are stored as adipose tissue. Too much body fat can lead to unhealthy weight gain and obesity and other diseases.

### Proteins

Protein is the building block for bones, connective tissue, skin, blood and vital organs. Protein plays a vital role in muscle development and health, tissue repair, healing, and hormone regulation. Protein helps largely with the recovery phase of training, repairing the tears and strains that naturally occur during exercise. All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy product, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the protein food group.

