Bread, Cereals and Potatoes

This food group also contains pasta, rice and noodles and is full of starchy carbohydrates - your body's main source of energy.

Unrefined and Refined Carbohydrates
Apart from potatoes, all the foods listed in this group began life as a grain, such as wheat, rye, corn, rice or barley. Potatoes and grains are very healthy and filling, however, you can be even healthier if you choose unrefined versions of these foods over refined versions.

Refined carbohydrates refers to foods where machinery has been used to remove the high fibre bits (the bran and the germ) from the grain. White rice, white bread, sugary cereals, and pasta and noodles made from white flour are all examples of refined carbohydrates.

Unrefined carbohydrates still contain the whole grain, including the bran and the germ, so they're higher in fibre and will keep you feeling fuller for longer - great if you're trying to lose weight and hate feeling hungry. Examples include wholegrain rice, wholemeal bread, porridge oats, and wholewheat pasta. If you'd like to eat more fibre or beat hunger pangs, try these healthy swaps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refined</th>
<th>Swap for</th>
<th>Unrefined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frosted Flakes</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>Bran Flakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Toast</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>Porridge Oats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereal Bar</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>Rice Cakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Bread</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>Wholemeal Baguette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal Pasta</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>Wholewheat Pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadstick</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>Dark Rye Crispbread</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Simple and complex carbohydrates
These are often confused with refined and unrefined carbohydrates, but the terms simple and complex refer to how complicated the chemical structure of a carbohydrate is rather than to whether it's wholegrain or not. Complex carbohydrates are the most common and there are three kinds:

- **Glycogen** - This is your body's major fuel source and is sometime referred to as blood sugar. It's formed from glucose, which is found in almost all foods, and is converted into energy.
- **Starch** - This is only found in plants and, contrary to popular belief, it isn't fattening (it's the rich sauces, fats and oils often added to pasta, potatoes, rice, noodles and bread that are the culprits!).
- **Fibre** (non-starch polysaccharide) - This is abundant in unrefined carbohydrates, fruit and veg, and important because it helps your body to process waste efficiently and helps you to feel fuller for longer.

Did you know...?
On average, you have the equivalent of four teaspoons of sugar circulating in your bloodstream. With food-refining machinery came the invention of white bread. At the time, it was considered to be an enormous luxury and only the very rich could afford to eat.

How much is enough?
Nutritionists recommend that the bread, cereals and potatoes group makes up the bulk of your diet - roughly 47-50%. They also suggest that your dietary intake includes 18g of fibre every day. An easy way to do this is to make sure that a food from this group forms the basis of every meal - and opt for fibre-rich unrefined carbohydrates. Here are some healthy ideas to get you started:

- Porridge oats with natural yoghurt, raisins and sunflower seeds for breakfast
- Wholemeal bread banana sandwich or jacket potato and chilli for lunch
- Seafood paella, made with brown rice, for dinner

Top tip
If you decide to increase the amount of fibre you eat, try to drink more water too. Your body doesn't digest fibre, so you need the extra water to help it flow through your digestive system with ease.

Please consult your doctor if you are considering any lifestyle changes