

How to Stretch Your Carbohydrate Intake

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Bulk it up, give body and balance, camouflage it, show it off, switch it up. Sound like a fashionista getting styling tips? They're actually simple techniques on how to stretch your carbohydrate intake.

Whether you're watching carbs to control your weight or you're trying to control your blood sugar and blood glucose levels, carbohydrates are an important part of good nutrition, but it's important not to eat too much at one time. So get the most mileage out of the carbs you *can* have.



You can play tricks on your taste buds as well as your eyes by combining high-carb ingredients with the low-carb ones. You'll get all the satisfaction that comes from those high carbs without overdoing it. By mixing carbs, your dishes will pop with color, texture and flavor while getting more nutritional benefits because you're eating more fruits and veggies.

But it goes beyond mixing them up, it's how you mix them, how you cut them, even how you serve them. Check out some of these techniques:

1. Increase the volume (and flavor) of rice, pasta or potato dishes by tossing in sauteed low-carb veggies, such as mushrooms, onions and garlic, or add some fresh quartered grape tomatoes and chopped green onion at the very end.
2. Give substance to your salads by including small amounts of high-carb foods, such as garbanzo beans, edamame or even leftover cooked whole-grain pasta with your dark leafy lettuces.
3. Trick your taste buds by cooking sweet potatoes with carrots (instead of just potatoes) to give the taste of potatoes, or try cooking cauliflower florets with rotini or penne to bulk up your pasta serving.
4. How you cut bread or a vegetable can give you that feeling of "more." Thinly slice your portion of bread and get two or more pieces instead of one. Chunk up your vegetables rather than dicing them to give a hearty visual as well as a bigger bite.
5. When it comes to appetizers and snacks, go beyond the chips and crackers by lightly spooning your spreads and salsas on rounds of cucumber, squash, plum tomatoes and endive. Or turn them into miniature wraps with spinach or small Bibb lettuce leaves.
6. Incorporate vegetable "noodles" in a pasta dish by tossing in strips of raw zucchini in with the hot pasta. Make the ribbons by running a vegetable peeler lengthwise down the raw zucchini. Try thin strips of carrots or bell peppers: Simply pop them in the hot water with the pasta for the last 15 seconds.

Zucchini Ribbon Feta Pasta

(For full nutritional information, here is a [link](#) to the recipe we created in MyPlate.)

Prep Time: 12 minutes

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Serves: 4

Serving Size: 1 cup

Ingredients

* 1 medium zucchini

- * 2 ounces whole-grain spaghetti noodles, broken in half
- * 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved
- * 1/4 cup finely chopped green onion
- * 2 ounces slivered almonds
- * 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- * 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
- * 1 tablespoon canola oil
- * 1/2 medium garlic clove, minced
- * 1/4 teaspoon salt
- * 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon dried pepper flakes, optional
- * 2 1/2 ounces reduced-fat feta or reduced-fat blue cheese

Directions

1. Using a vegetable peeler, cut the zucchini lengthwise into thin ribbons. Set aside.
2. Cook pasta according to package directions, omitting any salt or fat. Add the zucchini during the last 15 seconds of cooking.
3. Meanwhile, combine the remaining ingredients, except the cheese, in a large bowl.
4. Drain the pasta, reserving two tablespoons of the pasta water. Shake off excess liquid. Add the pasta mixture and reserved tablespoons of water to the tomato mixture and toss until well blended. Add the cheese and toss gently.

Short list of high-carb veggies and grains (to keep in control):

Potatoes
 Kidney, lima, navy and garbanzo beans
 Green peas
 Edamame (soybeans)
 Beets
 Corn
 Butternut, acorn squash
 Pasta, preferably whole-grain or multi-grain versions
 Rice, preferably brown
 Other grains, such as quinoa, millet, oats, bulgur, barley, farro, wheatberries, breads

Short list of low-carb veggies (to help stretch those higher carbs):

Artichokes
 Asparagus
 Green beans
 Crookneck, zucchini squash
 Mushrooms
 Bell peppers, chili peppers
 Tomatoes
 Cauliflower
 Carrots
 Broccoli
 Spinach, kale, lettuces
 Cucumber