Understanding Carbohydrates

There are two forms of carbohydrates:

**Complex carbohydrates** (whole grains, vegetables, beans, & fruits):
- Are long chains of glucose units
- Provide fiber to slowly release energy over next 4-6 hours
- Provide long-lasting energy
- Increase serotonin level to help you feel good
- Satisfy appetite
- Are rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytochemicals
- Reduce risk of disease

**Simple carbohydrates** (sugar, desserts, candy):
- Are short units of sugar
- Go into system very quickly
- Do not promote satiety in high intakes
- May do the following:
  - Compromise nutrition and health
  - Provide calories without many nutrients
  - Promote insulin resistance
  - Turn off appetite-control mechanisms
  - Increase appetite for more sugar
  - Increase tension and fatigue

Be sure to:
- Eat high-fiber, complex carbohydrates.
- Reduce your sugar cravings by eating adequate complex carbohydrates.
- Satisfy your sweet tooth with:
  - Fresh fruits
  - Cereal sweetened with dried fruit such as cherries, apples, apricots, & raisins.
- Limit sugar intake to 30 – 40 grams or less of added sugars per day (fresh fruits are not included in this limit).
- Limit sugar intake to 15 grams or less of added sugars per day for those with diabetes and high triglycerides.

**Remember:** 1 teaspoon of sugar = 4 grams of sugar