

Auckland Regional Public Health Service Nutrition Fact Sheet – Myth Busting “Don’t eat carbohydrates at night.”

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This claim is doing the rounds at the moment – have you heard it? For some unknown reason it is attracting an increasing number of followers. Proponents state that if you eat carbohydrate at night it will be converted to fat tissue as you sleep. At the same time it appears to be fine to consume protein and fat after sunset. The reasoning behind such a theory is illogical and evidence is non-existent.

Weight (fat) gain occurs when energy intake exceeds energy expenditure. It is a totally flawed concept that it is the carbohydrate portion of an evening meal that is responsible for any excess energy (calories). In fact carbohydrate has a lower energy density compared to protein and fat:

- 1 gram carbohydrate = 3.75 calories
- 1 gram protein = 4 calories
- 1 gram fat = 9 calories
- 1 gram alcohol = 7 calories

Carbohydrate is also the preferred source of fuel for the body and is the least likely macronutrient to end up as stored body fat.

Another belief is that our bodies work on a 24-hour clock. Following this theory any excess energy at the end of the day is converted to fat tissue during the night when our metabolic rate is lower. The reality is that energy intake and energy expenditure is not balanced on a daily or even a weekly basis, but over a period of time.

Enjoy pasta, rice, potatoes and other starchy vegetables with your evening meal!

- ❑ Did you know? All carbohydrate is digested to glucose.
- ❑ The adult brain requires about 140g of glucose per day and the red blood cells about 40g.
- ❑ In the absence of carbohydrate the body can produce glucose from proteins, lactic acid and glycerol. However, it can only produce approximately 130g per day through this process. Hence, there is a short fall of 50 g.
- ❑ The brain can adapt to this shortfall and oxidise ketone bodies for the remainder of its energy needs. However, this ketotic state is dangerous and judgement maybe impaired.
- ❑ Carbohydrates are an essential part of a healthy diet!