# Longevity expert dispels myths about carbohydrates and longevity



Dan Buettner, a longevity researcher who has devoted much of his career to studying the dietary habits of centenarians, has addressed a widespread misconception regarding carbohydrates. Speaking on TikTok to his 153,800 followers, Buettner challenged the negative reputation of carbohydrates, emphasising their importance in diets associated with long life.

“There’s a lot of lies on Instagram and the internet, and one of them is that carbs are bad for you,” Buettner stated. He clarified that while simple carbohydrates—such as refined grains, sugars, and high fructose corn syrup—are among the most unhealthy dietary components, complex carbohydrates play a vital role in healthy longevity diets. “Those are the most healthy ingredients in longevity diets—and why do I know this? Because, I know exactly what 100-year-olds have eaten their entire life, and it’s mostly complex carbs.”

Complex carbohydrates include foods such as beans, whole grains, and tubers. These are characterised by their lengthy chains of sugar molecules, which take longer to digest and may help reduce cravings for unhealthy snacks. In contrast, simple carbohydrates generally consist of one or two sugar molecules and are quickly broken down by the body, potentially causing rapid spikes in blood sugar.

Buettner's comments align with recommendations from health authorities such as the European Food Safety Authority, which suggests an average daily intake of around 260 grams of complex carbohydrates, adjusted according to individual factors such as age, sex, and activity level. The American Heart Association also highlights the differing impacts of carbohydrate types, noting that foods high in simple sugars, particularly fructose, may elevate triglyceride levels and increase cardiovascular risk. In contrast, complex carbohydrates—found in apples, whole-grain bread, and similar foods—digest more slowly and provide sustained energy while promoting a longer feeling of fullness.

In previous discussions, Buettner specifically highlighted items like beans, whole grains, leafy greens, and sweet potatoes as some of the best sources of complex carbohydrates. He cautioned against consuming doughnuts, candy, and cookies, which are typically rich in simple sugars. “Both lentil beans and jelly beans are carbs, and the most unhealthy foods in our food systems tend to be very simple carbohydrates,” he noted. “We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that people who live the longest, that we can actually record, were eating mostly complex carbohydrates. But the problem is the doughnuts and the cakes and the candies give carbohydrates a bad name.”

Buettner concluded by emphasising the necessity of a balanced diet, including fats and proteins, but stressed that “you should be eating mostly complex carbohydrates if you actually want to live to 100.” His insights contribute to ongoing discussions about healthy eating patterns and longevity, drawing on empirical observations from populations with notably long lifespans.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.businessinsider.com/blue-zones-diet-is-high-carb-healthy-for-longevity-2020-1> - This article supports Dan Buettner's emphasis on complex carbohydrates in longevity diets, highlighting that whole grains, greens, nuts, and beans are staples in the Blue Zones.
* <https://www.thebrighterside.news/post/scientists-discover-a-surprising-connection-between-high-carb-diets-and-longevity> - It corroborates the role of high-carb diets rich in complex carbohydrates like beans, grains, and vegetables in promoting longevity, as observed in the Blue Zones.
* <https://plantbasednews.org/lifestyle/health/dan-buettner-complex-carbohydrates/> - This article emphasizes Dan Buettner's advocacy for complex carbohydrates over simple ones, aligning with his comments on the importance of nutrient-dense carbs for longevity.
* <https://www.instagram.com/danbuettner/reel/DEqYXDUSwY-/> - This Instagram video by Dan Buettner highlights the difference between healthy and unhealthy carbohydrates, advocating for a diet rich in complex carbs.
* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK298903/> - Although blocked, this NCBI page relates to lessons from the Blue Zones, focusing on lifestyle and environmental factors contributing to longevity, which might include dietary aspects like complex carbohydrates.