

# THE LIGHTER SIDE

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## PASTA MANIA

Pasta is an excellent source of carbohydrate food that provides glucose, the fuel vital for brain and muscles. It releases the glucose gradually in the blood, which helps prevent sugar and insulin spikes. Pasta has a low glycaemic index (GI), which means a slower rate of digestion and is more helpful for appetite control. If you are looking for a quick and good meal to satisfy your cravings, pasta is an excellent choice.

Gluten, a protein, gives the pasta its chewy texture. Wheat, Rye, and Bulgur are good sources of gluten. Gluten helps reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and colon cancer. For people who are not able to consume gluten due to intolerance or allergies, gluten-free pastas are available in some supermarkets and taste just as good.

Pasta is also a good source of folate and carotenoids—lutein and zeaxanthin. Folate plays a major role in red blood cell formation and carotenoids are nutrients for eye health.

Refined, enriched pasta, along with carbohydrate, contains B vitamins and iron but is lower in fibre. Go for wholemeal pasta instead and always consume the right portion size that helps maintain the blood sugar level. A cup of wholegrain pasta contains approximately 4g of fibre, while a cup of refined pasta contains only 2g of fibre. Wholegrain pasta also contains magnesium and selenium. Magnesium helps to metabolise the carbohydrate and selenium is a powerful antioxidant that protects cells from free radicals.

Enjoy your pasta al dente, or firm to bite, to keep you full for longer and for slower digestion. Half a cup cooked pasta with lean protein, green, red and yellow vegetables is ideal to maintain the energy level. Pasta with ground chicken or beef, roasted bell pepper, broccoli, basil, cherry tomatoes, and a pinch of chilli flakes will make a well-balanced and colourful meal. Protein-packed pasta is the perfect post-workout meal. Pasta with chicken, peas and vegetables will stimulate the protein synthesis, improve recovery and enhance the performance during the next workout. *Try out the Grilled Chicken & Pear Wholegrain Pasta Salad recipe on Page 19 by Amy Vong!*

*About the author: Kohila Govindaraju is an accredited nutritionist and director of THE BERRIES Nutrition Consulting, an avid blogger ([kohilag.wordpress.com](http://kohilag.wordpress.com)) and prolific author of magazine articles on food and nutrition, including a book titled How to Lose Weight Without Hunger published by PatientsEngage.*

