

Carbohydrates cause obesity and diabetes in cats.

It's a myth

There is a misperception among pet owners that because cats are carnivores, they should only be fed meat.

The facts

Like all mammals, cats obtain energy from three macronutrients: protein, fat and carbohydrate.¹

- Many cells in a cat's body require glucose, a form of carbohydrate, for energy
- While cats in the wild eat minimal carbohydrates, the domestic cat's digestive system can readily handle higher carbohydrate levels.

Although cats metabolize carbohydrates differently than dogs and other species, healthy cats can readily digest and metabolize dietary carbohydrates.²

- Carbohydrates in nutritionally complete and balanced diets provide energy, while protein is used for other important functions such as maintenance of tissues and support of the immune system.

The intake of excess calories— whether from protein, fat or carbohydrate — contributes to obesity and obesity-related diseases, such as feline diabetes.²

- An inactive lifestyle also can increase the risk for feline obesity and diabetes.
- Low-carbohydrate diets are usually higher in fat and calories, which increase the risk for obesity.

There are circumstances when a low-carbohydrate diet is appropriate.

- For diabetic cats, transitioning to a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet may be beneficial.

Remember

Even though cats are carnivores, a feline diet containing high-quality carbohydrates serves as an excellent source of energy and allows the protein in the food to be used for other important functions.

1. Laflamme DP. Cats and carbohydrates: implications for health and disease. *Compend Contin Educ Vet.* 2010;E1–E3.

2. de-Oliveira LD, Carciofi AC, Oliveira MCC, et al. Effects of six carbohydrate sources on diet digestibility and postprandial glucose and insulin responses in cats. *J Anim Sci.* 2008;86:2237–2246.

