SUMMARY:

Most of the carbohydrates in nature occur as polysaccharides. Polysaccharides are polymers of monosaccharides, composed of glucose units linked together by a- and β - glycosidic linkages. Some polysaccharides are linear, while others are branched; as the degree of ramification increases, there are corresponding changes in physical properties like water solubility, viscosity, and gelling behavior. Food polysaccharides comprise starches on the one hand, and starch derivatives together with numerous socalled NSPs (Non Starch Polysaccharides) on the other. The latter group of hydrocolloids, together with a small proportion of starch and non-carbohydrate substances such as lignin and indigestible proteins, constitutes dietary fibre. These polysaccharides are now employed in increasing quantities (although usually at low levels of incorporation) in food technology, as thickeners, binders, stabilizers, emulsifiers, and suspending and gelling agents. On the other hand, polysaccharides have a nutraceutical applications like they have ability to lower excessive cholesterol synthesis, lower high blood pressure and decrease blood-glucose level. This function of foods is however not a modern concept since

Hippocrates already 400 BC expressed it as: "Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food".

