

BACK TO BASICS!

Beginner's guide

CARBOHYDRATE COUNTING

Carb counting is a meal-planning method in which you add up the grams of carbohydrate in your meals and snacks. Compared with protein and fat, carbs have the greatest effect on your blood glucose. By counting how many grams of carb you'll be eating, you can more accurately dose mealtime insulin and keep your blood glucose stable. If you don't use mealtime insulin, you might count carbs to track how your intake affects your glucose levels. Or you may choose to use a more basic form of carb tracking, such as the "plate method" (learn how to use it at right).

FOODS WITH CARBOHYDRATE



DAIRY
(milk, yogurt)



LEGUMES
(beans)



FRUIT
(fresh fruit, fruit juice, dried fruit)



STARCHY VEGETABLES
(corn, potatoes)



GRAINS
(bread, cereal, pasta, rice)



SWEETS
(candy, cake, pastry, soda)

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving Size	2/3 cup (55 g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
	% Daily Value
Total Fat 8 g	10%
Saturated Fat 1 g	5%
Trans Fat 0 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	0%
Sodium 160 mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37 g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4 g	14%
Total Sugars 12 g	
Includes 10 g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3 g	
Vitamin D 2 mcg	10%
Calcium 260 mg	20%
Iron 8 mg	45%
Potassium 235 mg	6%

Note the serving size.

Pay attention to total carbohydrate.

Look for added sugars. Starting this year, certain food packages will begin listing sugars that are added, not naturally occurring.

COMPARING CARBS

Here's what 15 grams of carb looks like:

Work with your dietitian or diabetes educator to determine how many grams of carb to have at each meal and snack. For instance, if you're trying to stick to 45 grams of carb at lunchtime, try:

GRILLED CHICKEN ON A HAMBURGER BUN

+

MIXED GREEN SALAD

+

SMALL APPLE

3 cups popcorn

1/2 hamburger bun

1 cup tomato soup

1/3 cup cooked rice

4 to 6 crackers

1/3 cup cooked pasta

Sources include: Christy L. Parkin, MSN, RN, CDE, a certified diabetes educator with Health Management Resources Inc. Diabetes Education and Consulting Services; Madelyn L. Wheeler, MS, RDN, FADA, FAND, CD, a registered dietitian nutritionist with Nutritional Computing Concepts; Alison Evert, MS, RD, CDE, manager of Nutrition and Diabetes Education Programs with the University of Washington School of Medicine

CARB-COUNTING METHODS

1

BASIC: THE PLATE METHOD



NONSTARCHY VEGETABLES
(broccoli, lettuce, asparagus)



PROTEIN
(fish, chicken)



WHOLE GRAINS
(brown rice, whole wheat)

2

ADVANCED: INSULIN-TO-CARB RATIO

This tells you how many grams of carb are covered by each unit of mealtime insulin. Your health care provider will help you determine your ratio and teach you how to use it.

Carb Counting Toolbox

For accurate portion sizes, use:

- a small scale
- a measuring cup

FIND OUT MORE about carb counting at diabetesforecast.org/carbcounting.