

Client Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

RD/DTR \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# Carbohydrate Counting for People with Diabetes

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## Why Is Carbohydrate Counting Important?

- Counting carbohydrate servings may help you to control your blood glucose level so that you feel better.
- The balance between the carbohydrates you eat and insulin determines what your blood glucose level will be after eating.
- Carbohydrate counting can also help you plan your meals.

## Which Foods Have Carbohydrates?

Foods with carbohydrates include:

- Breads, crackers, and cereals
- Pasta, rice, and grains
- Starchy vegetables, such as potatoes, corn, and peas
- Beans and legumes
- Milk, soy milk, and yogurt
- Fruits and fruit juices
- Sweets, such as cakes, cookies, ice cream, jam, and jelly

## Carbohydrate Servings

In diabetes meal planning, 1 serving of a food with carbohydrate has about 15 grams of carbohydrate:

- Check serving sizes with measuring cups and spoons or a food scale.
- Read the Nutrition Facts on food labels to find out how many grams of carbohydrate are in foods you eat.
- The food lists in this handout show portions that have about 15 grams of carbohydrate.

## Food Lists for Carbohydrate Counting

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1 serving = about 15 grams of carbohydrate

### Starches

- 1 slice bread (1 ounce)
- 1 tortilla (6-inch size)
- ¼ large bagel (1 ounce)
- 2 taco shells (5-inch size)
- ½ hamburger or hot dog bun (1 ounce)
- ¾ cup ready-to-eat cereal
- ½ cup cooked cereal
- 1 cup broth-based soup
- 4-6 small crackers
- ⅓ cup pasta or rice (cooked)
- ½ cup beans, peas, corn, sweet potatoes, winter squash, or mashed or boiled potatoes (cooked)
- ¼ large baked potato (3 ounces)
- ¾ ounce pretzels, potato chips, or tortilla chips
- 3 cups popcorn (popped)

### Fruit

- 1 small fresh fruit (4 ounces)
- ½ cup canned fruit
- ¼ cup dried fruit (2 tablespoons)
- 17 small grapes (3 ounces)
- 1 cup melon or berries
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- ½ cup fruit juice

### Milk

- 1 cup fat-free or reduced-fat milk
- 1 cup soy milk
- ⅔ cup (6 ounces) fat-free yogurt sweetened with sugar-free sweetener

### Sweets and Desserts

- 2-inch square cake (unfrosted)
- 2 small cookies (⅔ ounce)
- ½ cup ice cream or frozen yogurt
- ¼ cup sherbet or sorbet
- 1 tablespoon syrup, jam, jelly, table sugar, or honey
- 2 tablespoons light syrup

### Other Foods

- Count 1 cup raw vegetables or ½ cup cooked nonstarchy vegetables as zero carbohydrate servings or “free” foods. If you eat 3 or more servings at one meal, count them as 1 carbohydrate serving.
- Foods that have less than 20 calories in each serving also may be counted as zero carbohydrate servings or “free” foods.
- Count 1 cup of casserole or other mixed foods as 2 carbohydrate servings.

## Meal Planning Tips

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- A meal plan tells you how many carbohydrate servings to eat at your meals and snacks. For many adults, eating 3 to 5 servings of carbohydrate foods at each meal and 1 or 2 carbohydrate servings for each snack works well.
- In a healthy daily meal plan, most carbohydrates come from:
  - 5 servings of fruits and vegetables
  - 3 servings of whole grains
  - 2 to 4 servings of milk or milk products
- Check your blood glucose level regularly. It can tell you if you need to adjust the timing of when you eat carbohydrates.
- Eating foods that have fiber, such as whole grains, and having very few salty foods is good for your health.
- Eat 4 to 6 ounces of meat or other protein foods (such as soybean burgers) each day. Choose low-fat sources of protein, such as lean beef, lean pork, chicken, fish, low-fat cheese, or vegetarian foods such as soy.
- Eat some healthy fats, such as olive oil, canola oil, and nuts.
- Eat very little saturated fats. These unhealthy fats are found in butter, cream, and high-fat meats, such as bacon and sausage.
- Eat very little or no *trans* fats. These unhealthy fats are found in all foods that list “partially hydrogenated” oil as an ingredient.

## Label Reading Tips

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The Nutrition Facts panel on a label lists the grams of total carbohydrate in 1 standard serving. The label’s standard serving may be larger or smaller than 1 carbohydrate serving.

To figure out how many carbohydrate servings are in the food:

- Look first at the label’s standard serving size.
- Then check the grams of total carbohydrate. This is the amount of carbohydrate in 1 standard serving.
- Divide the grams of total carbohydrate by 15. This number equals the number of carbohydrate servings in 1 standard serving. Remember: 1 carbohydrate serving is 15 grams of carbohydrate.
- Note: You may ignore the grams of sugars on the Nutrition Facts panel because they are included in the grams of total carbohydrate.

## Sample 1-Day Menu

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Total Carbohydrate Servings: 15

<b>Breakfast</b>	<p>1 small banana (1 carbohydrate serving)  <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> cup corn flakes (1 carbohydrate serving)            1 cup fat-free or low-fat milk (1 carbohydrate serving)            1 slice whole wheat bread (1 carbohydrate serving)            1 teaspoon soft margarine</p>
<b>Lunch</b>	<p>2 ounces lean meat (for sandwich)            2 slices whole wheat bread (2 carbohydrate servings)            Raw vegetables: 3-4 carrot sticks, 3-4 celery sticks, 2 lettuce leaves            1 cup fat-free or low-fat milk (1 carbohydrate serving)            1 small apple (1 carbohydrate serving)</p>
<b>Snack</b>	<p><math>\frac{1}{4}</math> cup canned apricots (1 carbohydrate serving)  <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> ounce unsalted mini-pretzels (1 carbohydrate serving)</p>
<b>Evening Meal</b>	<p>3 ounces lean roast beef  <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> large baked potato (2 carbohydrate servings)            1 tablespoon reduced-fat sour cream  <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> cup green beans            1 vegetable salad: lettuce, <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> cup raw vegetables, and 1 tablespoon light salad dressing            1 small whole wheat dinner roll (1 carbohydrate serving)            1 teaspoon soft margarine            1 cup melon balls (1 carbohydrate serving)</p>
<b>Snack</b>	<p>6 ounces low-fat fruit yogurt with sugar-free sweetener (1 carbohydrate serving)            2 tablespoons unsalted nuts</p>

### Approximate Nutrition Analysis:

Calories: 1,675; Protein: 84g (20% of calories); Carbohydrate: 247g (57% of calories),  
 Carbohydrate Servings: 15; Fat: 44g (23% of calories); Sodium: 2,243mg; Fiber: 24g;  
 Cholesterol: 154mg

### Notes: