

DIABETES EDUCATION

CARBOHYDRATE COUNTING

Why Is Carbohydrate Counting Important?

- Helps to control blood glucose level so that you feel better
- Helps you plan your meals
- Ideally, you should have a consistent amount of carbohydrates in your diet throughout the day – in other words, don't eat them all in one meal

Which Foods Have Carbohydrates?



Breadfruit ('ulu)



Taro



Sweet potato



Yams



Rice



Coconut



Corn



Bread



Cereal



Chips



Cookies



Sweets



Fruits



Juice



Milk



Soda

Carbohydrates in Meal Planning

- In diabetes meal planning, one carbohydrate choice, or “carb choice” has about 15 grams of carbohydrate.
- Read Nutrition Facts on food labels to know how many grams of carbohydrate are in foods you eat.

Meal-Planning Tips

- For many adults, eating 3–5 carb choices at each meal and 1–2 carb choices for each snack works well.
- Check your blood glucose regularly to see if you need to adjust when you eat carbohydrates.
- Eating foods that have fiber, such as vegetables and whole grains, is very good for controlling your blood sugar.
- Eat 4–6 ounces of fish, chicken, or lean meat each day for your healthy protein source.

Label-Reading Tips

- Pay attention to the label’s standard serving size and servings per container/package.
 - In this example, the serving size is **1 ounce or about 21 pieces**
- Check the total grams of carbohydrate. This is the amount of carbohydrate in one standard serving.
 - In this example, the total grams of carbohydrate is **14 grams per serving**
- Divide the grams of total carbohydrate by 15 to find the number of carbohydrate choices in one standard serving.
 - In this example, the amount of carbohydrate choices you would get if you ate ONE serving would be **one carbohydrate choice**

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 oz. (28g/About 21 pieces)	
Servings Per Container About 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 170	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 11g	17%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	8%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 250mg	10%
Total Carbohydrate 14g	5%
Dietary Fiber less than 1g	2%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 2g	

Examples of 1 Carbohydrate Choice

Each choice has about 15 grams of carbohydrate

Starches

- 2 pieces of breadfruit (2 ounces)
- 1 slice of bread (1 ounce)
- 1/3 cup cooked rice (white or brown)
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cereal, ready-to-eat
- 1/2 cup sugar-frosted cereal, ready-to-eat
- 1 single-serving bag of potato chips
- 1/2 hamburger bun or hot dog bun (3/4 ounce)
- 4–6 crackers (average size)
- 1/3 cup pasta

Fruit

- 1 small fresh fruit (3/4–1 cup)
- 1 medium-sized banana
- 1/2 papaya or mango
- 1/2 cup canned or frozen fruit
- 2 tablespoons dried fruit (apricots, raisins, prunes, blueberries, cranberries, etc.)
- 15 medium grapes
- 3/4 cup fresh pineapple
- 1/2 cup apple, grapefruit, orange, or pineapple juice
- 1/3 cup grape or cranberry juice

Starchy Vegetables/Beans

- 1/2 cup cooked beans or peas
- 1/2 cup corn
- 1/2 cup cooked sweet potato
- 1/3 cup cooked yams or taro
- 1/2 cup mashed potato

Milk

- 1 cup fat-free or reduced-fat milk
- 1/2 cup chocolate milk
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- 1 cup soy milk (unsweetened)
- 2/3 cup plain yogurt
- 2 cups almond milk (unsweetened)
- 1/2 cup rice milk (unsweetened)

Sweets and Desserts

- 2-inch-square cake (unfrosted)
- 2 small cookies (2/3 ounce)
- 1/2 cup ice cream or pudding
- 1/2 fruit toaster pastry
- 1 tablespoon syrup, jam, jelly, sugar, agave, or honey

Sample Meal Plan

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks (if recommended)
2 pieces breadfruit ½ papaya 1 boiled egg 1 cup 1% milk Coffee/tea	3 oz grilled fish ⅓ cup cooked taro 1 small salad w/light dressing 1 medium-sized banana 1 cup melon 1 cup light yogurt Water	3 oz lean chicken ⅓ cup cooked brown rice 1 cup broccoli 1 cup cooked carrots 1 small apple 1 cup 1% milk	1 slice of bread 1 Tbsp peanut butter Unsweetened iced tea

Portion Control



One fist clenched = 8 fluid ounces
 • Cold and hot beverages



Two hands, cupped = 1 cup
 • Breakfast cereal
 • Soup
 • Green salads (lettuce or spinach)
 • Mixed dishes (chili, stew, macaroni and cheese)
 • Chinese food



One hand, cupped = 1/2 cup
 • Pasta, rice
 • Hot cereal (oatmeal, farina)
 • Fruit salad, berries, applesauce
 • Tomato or spaghetti sauce
 • Beans (cooked or canned)
 • Cole slaw or potato salad
 • Mashed potatoes
 • Cottage cheese
 • Pudding, gelatin



Palm of hand = 3 ounces
 • Cooked meats (hamburger patty, chicken breast, fish fillet, pork loin)
 • Canned fish (tuna, salmon)



Two thumbs together = 1 tablespoon
 • Peanut butter
 • Salad dressing
 • Sour cream
 • Dips
 • Whipped topping
 • Dessert sauces
 • Margarine
 • Cream cheese
 • Mayonnaise

*Adapted from MyPyramid.gov. This handout is only a guide. The amounts of foods in your meal plan may be different. Provided as a FREE educational service on www.learningaboutdiabetes.org. © 2008 Learning About Diabetes, Inc. All rights reserved.

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