

Paving Your Path to Diabetes Management: Basic Carbohydrate Counting and Glycemic Index

What is?

Carbohydrate is one of the three main nutrients found in the food. Starches, fruit, milk products, sugar, and some vegetables have carbohydrates. Your body needs carbohydrate for energy. It breaks them down into a sugar called glucose. Your brain and body need glucose to work properly.

Carbohydrates and diabetes

With diabetes, it is important to eat the right types and amounts of carbohydrate. Some carbohydrates make your blood glucose go high quickly. Others raise your blood glucose slowly and to a smaller degree.



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Choosing The Right Types of Carbohydrates

The Glycemic Index (GI) groups carbohydrate foods by how they affect your blood glucose levels. Using the Glycemic index, you can make better food choices.

Chose Low and Medium GI foods more often.

Low GI Choose most often	Medium GI Choose more often	High GI Choose less often
Breads: 100% stone ground whole wheat Heavy mixed grain Pumpernickel	Breads: Whole wheat Rye Pita	Breads: White bread Kaiser roll Bagel, white
Cereal: All Bran™ Bran Buds with Psyllium™ Oat Bran™	Cereal: Grapenuts™ Puffed wheat Oatmeal Quick oats	Cereal: Bran flakes Corn flakes Rice Krispies™
Grains: Barley Bulgar Pasta/noodles Parboiled or converted rice	Grains: Basmati rice Brown rice Couscous	Grains: Short-grain rice
Other: Sweet potato Yam Legumes Lentils Chickpeas Kidney beans Split peas Soy beans Baked beans	Other: Potato, new/white Sweet corn Popcorn Stoned Wheat Thins™ Ryvita™ (rye crisps) Black bean soup Green pea soup	Other: Potato, baking (Russet) French fries Pretzels Rice cakes Soda crackers

How much carbohydrate do you need?

The amount of carbohydrate you need depends on your age and weight. It also depends on how active you are. Speak to the dietitian on your health care team to see what is the right amount for you.

General guideline for women and men:

	Women	Men
In a meal	3 to 4 carbohydrate choices	4 to 5 carbohydrate choices
In a snack	1 to 2 carbohydrate choices	1 to 2 carbohydrate choices

Making food choices

In this chart, each food choice contains about 15 grams of carbohydrate. That is what we call 'one carbohydrate choice'. In the chart, we show in brackets how to measure the portion, using either:

- cup measure
- milliliters (mL)
- tablespoons (tbsp) or
- grams (g)

Grains and Starches	Fruits	Vegetables
bread, 1 slice	orange, apple or pear (1 medium)	canned peas (1/2 cup, 125 mL)
cold cereal (1/2 cup, 125 mL)	peach (1 large)	fresh or frozen peas, parsnip (3/4 cup, 175 mL)
oatmeal, cooked (3/4 cup, 175 mL)	Banana (1 small or 1/2 large)	yam (1/2 cup, 125 mL)
cream of wheat, cooked (3/4 cup, 175 mL)	canned fruit in light syrup (1/2 cup, 125 mL)	sweet potato (1/3 cup, 75 mL)
large bagel, 1/4	Grapes (1/2 cup or 15 pieces)	squash or pumpkin (1 cup, 250 mL)
pita bread, (1/2, 6 inch/15 cm)	medium kiwis or plums (2)	tomatoes, canned, regular (2 cups, 500 mL)
tortilla (10 inch/25 cm)		tomatoes, canned, stewed (1 cup, 250 mL)
cooked rice (1/3 cup, 75 mL)		

<p>pasta, barley or buckewheat, cooked (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p> <p>rice, brown and white, long grain, cooked (1/3 cup, 75 mL)</p> <p>small potato 1/2, or potato (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p> <p>corn, kernel (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p> <p>corn, cob (1/2 ear, 73 g)</p> <p>cooked beans, lentils, split peas, (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p>	<p>Apricots (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p> <p>blueberries or melons** (1cup, 250 mL)</p> <p>Raisins (2 Tbsp, 18 g)</p> <p>fruit juice (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p>	<p>Most other vegetables are very low in carbohydrate and high in nutrients and dietary fibre</p>
Milk and Alternatives	Other Choices	Food and Beverages with very little Carbohydrate
<p>Skim milk powder (2 tbsp, 30 mL)</p> <p>Evaporated milk, canned (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p> <p>milk or buttermilk (1 cup, 250 mL)</p> <p>plain or low-fat yogurt – 3/4 cup, 175 mL (for yogurt with fruit, read the Nutrition Facts Table)</p> <p>plain fortified soy beverage (1 cup, 250 mL)</p>	<p>sugar, syrup, jam, molasses or honey, (1 tablespoon, 15 mL)</p> <p>regular soft drink (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p> <p>1 plain muffin (45 g)**</p> <p>cream filled cookies, 2</p> <p>arrowroot cookies, 4</p> <p>popcorn, air popped or low fat (3 cups, 750 mL)</p> <p>granola bar, oatmeal type, 1 (28g)</p>	<p>coffee, black</p> <p>tea, black</p> <p>diet soft drinks</p> <p>herbs</p> <p>spices</p> <p>vinegar</p> <p>mustard</p> <p>other condiments</p>

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Adapted with permission from: Foster-Powell, K; Holt, S.H.A.; Brand-Miller, J.C., International Table of Glycemic Index and Glycemic Load Values, *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*: 2001;76:5-76.

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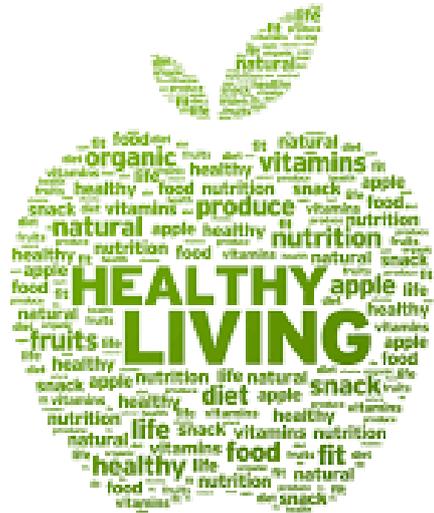
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cooked rice (1/3 cup, 75 mL)	blueberries or	Most other vegetables are very low in carbohydrate and high in nutrients and dietary fibre
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rice, brown and white, long		

<p>grain, cooked (1/3 cup, 75 mL)</p> <p>small potato 1/2, or potato (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p> <p>corn, kernel (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p> <p>corn, cob (1/2 ear, 73 g)</p> <p>cooked beans, lentils, split peas, (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p>	<p>melons** (1cup, 250 mL)</p> <p>Raisins (2 Tbsp, 18 g)</p> <p>fruit juice (1/2 cup, 125 mL)</p>	
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