



Diabetes and Carbohydrate Counting

Carbohydrates can be enjoyed by those living with diabetes as part of a healthy diet as long as intake is controlled and monitored. In fact, consistent, regulated carbohydrate intake is encouraged as part of proper management for blood glucose levels.

Foods containing carbohydrates include sweets with added sugars, fruits, starches (including starchy vegetables and grains), legumes (like beans and lentils) and dairy products. All of these foods should be considered when counting carbohydrates.

When living with diabetes, understanding how to count carbohydrates gives you the ability to plan your meals and include some of your favorite foods. Consider this:

- 15 grams of carbohydrates is considered one serving.
- Different amounts of different foods equal 15 grams (one serving) of carbohydrates. **See table.**
- Adults with diabetes are generally advised to eat 45-60 grams of carbohydrates at each of three meals and 15-30 grams of carbohydrates for each snack in-between meals.
- However, the number of grams of carbohydrates that should be eaten with each meal varies from person to person. For this reason, it is **suggested that you meet with a registered dietitian to help you best understand your needs.**

When eaten as one serving, non-starchy vegetables, such as broccoli, lettuce, and asparagus are considered “free foods,” because they contain very little carbohydrate in one serving. So 1 cup of raw or ½ cup of cooked vegetables is considered a “free food.” However, if you eat three or more servings of these foods per meal, you should count every 3 servings as 1 carbohydrate serving.

15 grams of carbohydrates (1 carb serving) is:

1 piece fresh fruit (4 oz.)
1 cup berries or melon
½ cup canned or frozen fruit
1 slice of bread (1 oz.) or 1 6” tortilla
½ cup of plain oatmeal
1/3 cup of pasta or rice
½ English muffin or hamburger bun
½ cup beans or starchy vegetable
¼ of large baked potato (3 oz. or size of egg)
2/3 cup plain fat-free yogurt
½ cup ice cream or sherbet
1 Tablespoon of syrup, jam, jelly, sugar, or honey

Tip:

If you have diabetes and you eat a casserole or soup with many different types of ingredients, be sure to consider and count each ingredient separately. Then, add up how much carbohydrate total is in each serving of the dish.