

CARBOHYDRATE COUNTING HANDOUT

Controlling your blood sugar is essential for people with diabetes. Use this guide to understand carbohydrate counting and how to do it. You will also find tips for meal planning and label reading that will allow you to put your new knowledge to practice!

WHY IS CARBOHYDRATE COUNTING SO IMPORTANT?

Counting carbohydrate servings may help you 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?

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

WHAT IS ONE SERVING CARBOHYDRATE?

In meal planning, 1 serving of a food with carbohydrate has about 15 grams of carbohydrates. Take these steps:

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 carbohydrates are in the foods you eat.

Use the food list in this handout to see portions of foods that have about 15 grams of carbohydrates.



FOOD LIST FOR CARBOHYDRATE COUNTING

1 serving = about 15 grams of carbohydrates

STARCHES



- 1 slice bread (1 ounce)
- 1 tortilla (6-inch diameter)
- ¼ large bagel (1 ounce)
- 2 hard taco shells (5-inch)
- ½ hamburger or hot dog bun (1 ounce)
- ¾ cup ready-to-eat cereal
- ½ cup cooked cereal
- 1 cup broth
- 4 - 6 crackers

MILK

- 1 cup fat-free or reduced fat milk
- 1 cup soy milk
- 2/3 cup fat-free yogurt sweetened with sugar-free sweetener (6 ounces)

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 of raisins
- ½ cup fruit juice

SWEETS AND DESSERTS

- 2-inch square cake (unfrosted)
- 2 small cookies (2/3 ounce)
- ½ cup ice cream or frozen yogurt
- 1 tablespoon syrup, jam, jelly, table sugar, or honey
- 2 tablespoons light syrup

OTHER FOODS



Count 1 cup raw vegetable or ½ cup cooked non-starchy vegetables as zero carbohydrate servings or “free” foods.

If you eat 3 or more servings at one meal, count them as 1 serving.

OTHER FOODS (Cont)



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.





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