

# Counting carbs

**Counting carbs can help you reach your blood glucose goals and prevent diabetes complications.**

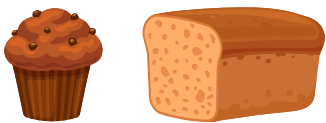
You can learn to count carbs to choose what and how much to eat. If you take insulin, you can count carbs to decide how much insulin to take.

## Why should I count serving sizes of carbs?

The amount carbs you eat can make a big difference in your blood glucose. If you eat more carbs than you normally do at a meal, your blood glucose level is likely to be higher than usual for several hours afterwards. Your blood glucose is more likely to stay in your target range with the right balance of carbs and insulin.

## Which foods have carbs?

Starchy foods, sugars, fruits, milk, and yogurt are mostly carbs. These foods affect your blood sugar much more than other foods, such as meat, vegetables, or fats.



bread, bagels, biscuits, chapatti, muffins, crackers, matzoh, and tortillas



pancakes and waffles



beans (such as black, garbanzo, kidney, lima, navy, or pinto beans), lentils, and peas (such as black-eyed or split peas)



ready-to-eat cereal or cooked cereal



popcorn, potato chips, pretzels, and rice cakes



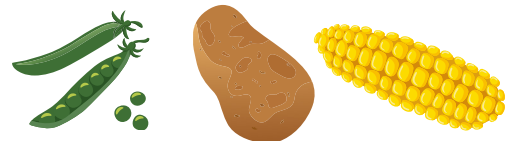
fruit (canned, dried, fresh, and frozen) and fruit juice



buttermilk, milk, soy milk, and yogurt



barley, bulgur, couscous, grits, kasha, pasta, and rice



starchy vegetables such as cassava, corn, peas, plantains, potatoes, and winter squash, and sweet potatoes



sweets, such as candy, cookies, cake, brownies, doughnuts, ice cream, frozen yogurt, honey, jam, jelly, pie, pudding, sugar, and syrup

## How much carb is right for me?

Your dietitian or diabetes educator can work with you to make a personalized plan. The number of servings of carbs right for you is based on your weight, activity level, diabetes medicines, and blood glucose goals. A general guideline is to have:

- ✓ 45-60 g of carbs at each meal
- ✓ 15-20 g of carbs at each snack

The chart below shows the size of 1 serving for each food listed. One serving equals 15 grams of carbs. You can check serving sizes with measuring cups and spoons or a food scale, or by using the package label.

## Serving sizes for some carbohydrate foods

**Each carb serving has about 15 g of carbs**

### Fruit

apple ..... 1 small  
banana ..... 1 extra small (4 oz)  
fruit, canned..... 1/2 cup

### Sweets

cake (unfrosted)... 2-inch square  
cookies ..... 2 small (2 1/4 inches  
across)  
ice cream (light)... 1/2 cup  
jam or jelly ..... 1 Tbsp  
sugar ..... 1 Tbsp

### Snacks

potato chips ..... 3/4 oz (about 9-13 chips)  
pretzels ..... 3/4 oz  
popcorn (popped). .3 cups

### Drinks

milk, fat-free or  
reduced-fat ..... 1 cup  
orange juice ..... 1/2 cup

### Starches

bread ..... 1 slice (1 oz)  
reduced calorie  
bread ..... 2 slices (1 1/2 oz)  
bagel ..... 1/4 large (1 oz)  
crackers (saltines)... 6  
hamburger bun ... 1/2 bun (1 oz)  
tortilla, corn or  
flour ..... 1 (6 inches across)  
taco shells ..... 2 (5 inches across)  
rice..... cup  
pasta (cooked) ..... cup  
cereal, unsweeted  
(ready-to-eat) ..... 3/4 cup  
hot cereal (cooked)... 1/2 cup

### Starchy vegetables

corn ..... 1/2 cup  
green peas..... 1/2 cup  
pinto or kidney  
beans (cooked) ... 1/2 cup  
potato (mashed) ... 1/2 cup  
sweet potato..... 1/2 cup

## Use the food label to check for carbs

To calculate a serving of carbs, check the label for the number of grams (g) of carbs and the number of servings in the package.

If the total carbohydrate is 15 g, that means that 1 serving gives you 15 g of carbs. Check the top of the food label for the serving size for 1 serving.

In this example, 1 carb serving is 6 crackers.

### Nutrition Facts

Serving size: 6 crackers

Total carbohydrate: 15 g

If the total carbohydrate **is more than 15 g**:

Divide the total carbohydrates by 15.

In this example,  $30 \text{ g} \div 15 = 2$ , so 1 carb serving is 2 cookies.

### Nutrition Facts

Serving size: 4 cookies

Total carbohydrate: 30 g

If the total **is less than 15 g**:

Divide 15 by the total number of carbohydrates.

In this example,  $15 \div 5 \text{ g} = 3$ , so 1 carb serving is 3 graham cracker squares.

### Nutrition Facts

Serving size: 1 graham cracker square

Total carbohydrate: 5 g