

# How to Count Carbohydrates

## What are carbohydrates?

- All foods we eat are made up of either carbohydrate, fat or protein.
- Carbohydrates can be divided into starches and sugars.

## Why count carbohydrates?

- When we eat carbohydrates we digest them into sugars, which are then absorbed into the blood stream and raise the blood sugar.
- We cannot live without carbohydrates—in fact, they should make up about 60-65% of our food intake.
- Excellent blood glucose goals can be achieved by keeping track of our carbohydrate intake with “carb counting” and then matching our exercise level and medication to balance the effect on blood sugar.

## Who should count carbohydrates?

- People with Type 1 diabetes, especially those who use an insulin pump, need to track carbs carefully in order to adjust insulin dosage.
- People with Type 2 diabetes who want to control their blood sugars using the least amount of medication possible.
- People with Type 2 diabetes who are using multiple daily injections of insulin.

### Reading Food Labels

Packaged foods have a “Nutrition Facts” label. It lists the total number of grams of carbohydrate, fat and protein in a typical serving. Be careful not to confuse the total weight of the food, with the total carbohydrate weight. For example, a slice of bread weighs 30 grams, but contains 15 grams of carbohydrate.

### Serving Size

#### 1 carbohydrate serving = 15 grams

To keep things simple, one carb serving has been set to 15 grams. Be careful to look at the size of a typical serving to estimate how many servings you are eating. For example 1 cup of hot cereal (recommended serving size on the package) is actually two carbohydrate servings or 30 grams.

### Goals

For the average adult, shoot for about **60-75 grams of carbohydrate with each meal** (4-5 servings). This would be about 60% carbohydrate for a diet of 1500-2000 calories per day.

## Carbohydrate content of foods

FOOD GROUP	SERVING SIZE	CARBOHYDRATE (approx)
Bread	1 slice	15 grams
Cereal (with 4 oz milk)	1 oz	20 grams
Cereal, cooked	½ cup	15 grams
Pasta, cooked	½ cup	15 grams
Rice, cooked	½ cup	30 grams
Potato, cooked	½ cup	30 grams
Starchy vegetable	½ cup	15 grams
Vegetable, cooked	½ cup	5 grams
Vegetable, raw	1 cup	5 grams
Fruit (apple, orange, etc)	1	15 grams
Fruit juice	½ cup	15 grams
Milk, skim	1 cup	12 grams
Yogurt, plain	¾ cup	12 grams
Soda	12 oz can	40 grams
Bagel (with or without cream cheese)	1	40 grams
Donut (plain, chocolate)	1	25-30 grams
Hershey's chocolate bar	1.5 oz	25 grams
Beer	12 oz	15 grams

Note: Meats and fats (butter, margarine, etc) contain no carbohydrate