



A Guide to Healthy Low-Carb Eating with Diabetes

Although diabetes is a complicated disease, maintaining good blood sugar control can greatly reduce the risk of complications. One of the ways to achieve better blood sugar levels is to follow a **low-carb diet**.

- If you have diabetes, your body cannot process carbohydrates effectively. Normally, when you eat carbs, they are broken down into small units of glucose, which end up as blood sugar.
- When blood sugar levels go up, the pancreas responds by producing the hormone insulin. This hormone allows the blood sugar to enter cells.
- In healthy people, blood sugar levels remain within a narrow range throughout the day. In diabetes, however, this system doesn't work the way it is supposed to.
 - This is a big problem, because having both too high and too low blood sugar levels can cause severe harm...
 - In type 1 diabetes, an autoimmune process destroys the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas. Diabetics must inject insulin several times a day to ensure that glucose gets into the cells and stays at a healthy level in the bloodstream (4Trusted Source).
 - In type 2 diabetes, the beta cells at first produce enough insulin, but the body's cells are resistant to its action, so blood sugar remains high. To compensate, the pancreas produces more insulin, attempting to bring blood sugar down.
 - Over time, the beta cells lose their ability to produce enough insulin
- Of the three nutrients -- protein, carbs and fat -- carbs have the greatest impact on blood sugar control. This is because the body breaks them down into glucose.
- Therefore, diabetics may need to take large dosages of insulin and/or diabetes medication when they eat a lot of carbohydrates.

Diabetics are deficient in insulin, or resistant to its effects. When they eat carbs, their blood sugar can rise to potentially dangerous levels unless medication is taken.

- The optimal amount of carbs may also vary by individual, since everyone has a unique response to carbs.
 - According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), there's no one-size-fits-all diet that works for everyone with diabetes. Personalized meal plans, which take into account your dietary preferences and metabolic goals.
 - The ADA also recommends that individuals work with their health care team to determine the carb intake that's right for them.
 - To figure out your ideal amount of carbs, you **have to measure your blood glucose with a meter before a meal and again 1 to 2 hours after eating.**
 - As long as your blood sugar remains below 140 mg/dL (8 mmol/L), the point at which damage to nerves can occur, you can consume 6 grams, 10 grams or 25 grams of carbs per meal on a low-carb diet.
 - **It all depends on your personal tolerance. Just remember that the general rule is the less carbs you eat, the less your blood sugar will rise.**
 - A healthy low-carb diet should include nutrient-dense, high-fiber carb sources like vegetables, berries, nuts and seeds.

Carb intake between 20–90 grams per day has been shown to be effective at improving blood sugar control. However, it's best to test blood sugar before and after eating to find your personal carb limit.

How to Count Carbs

Counting the carbs you eat at each meal or snack can help you balance them with your medications and keep your blood sugar stable.

- 60 grams of carbohydrates per meal for men (4 servings)
- 45 grams per meal for women (3 servings)

For example, 1 slice of bread is one carb choice. But 1/4 of a large baked potato is also one carb choice. So having a whole baked potato could blow your whole carb choice budget for one meal.

In general, it may be easiest to keep the amount of carbs you eat at each meal somewhat consistent. That way you don't have to adjust your medications too much.

Be mindful and check your portion sizes.

Bottom Line: Stick to low-carb foods like meat, fish, eggs, seafood, non-starchy vegetables and healthy fats. Avoid foods that are high in carbs...

Carbohydrate Food list

1. Breads, grains, and pasta	Portion Size	Carbs (g)
Bread	1 slice	10-20
Cornbread	1 piece (deck of cards)	30
Cornmeal (Dry)	2 Tbsp.	12
Cream of wheat, cooked with water	1/2 cup	15
Croutons	1/2 cup	12
Flour, all-purpose, dry	2 Tbsp.	12
Oatmeal, cooked with water	1/2 cup	12-15
Pasta, cooked	1 cup	45
Pita bread	6" to 9" pita	30-45
Rice, cooked	1 cup	45
Tortilla corn	6" tortilla	12
Tortilla flour	6" tortilla	15
2. Nuts and Legumes	Portion size	Carbs (g)
Beans (black, pinto, refried) and lentils, as prepared	1/2 cup	18-22
Hummus	1/2 cup	15-20
Nuts, mixed	1/2 cup	15
3. Starchy Vegetables	Portion size	Carbs (g)

Corn on the cob	6" to 9" ear	20-30
Corn, cooked or canned	½ cup	15
Peas	½ cup	12
Potato, baked	1 medium (6 oz.)	40
Potato, mashed	½ cup	15-20
Sweet potato/yams	1 medium (5 oz.)	25
Winter squash (butternut, acorn, hubbard), cooked	1 cup	15-30
	Portion size	Carbs (g)
4. Milk and yogurts		
Almond milk (plain, unsweetened)	1 cup	<1
Cow's milk (fat-free, 1%, 2%, whole)	1 cup	12
Soy milk (plain, unsweetened)	1 cup	3
Yogurt (plain)	1 cup	14
Yogurt, Greek (plain)	1 cup	10
	Portion Size	Carbs (g)
5. Fruits		
Apple	1 medium (tennis ball)	15-30
Applesauce (unsweetened)	½ cup	15
Apricots, dried	7 pieces	15
Banana	6"-9"	30-45
Blackberries, blueberries	1 cup	20
Cherries	12	15
Dates, dried	5-6 dates	30
Fruit cocktail, canned (in own juice)	½ cup	15
Grapefruit	½ large	15
Grapes	15	15
Kiwi	1 small (egg)	15
Mango, cubed and frozen	½ cup	15
Melons, cantaloupe or honeydew	1 cup	15
Orange	1 medium (tennis ball)	15
Peaches, canned (in own juice)	½ cup	15
Pear	6 oz.	20
Pineapple (fresh)	1 cup, diced	20
Plum	1 plum	10
Prunes, dried	3 prunes	15
Raisins	2 Tbsp.	15
Raspberries	1 cup	15
Strawberries	1 cup halves	12
Watermelon	1 cup diced	12
	Portion size	Carbs (g)
6. Snack Foods		
French fries (fast food restaurant)	Small order	30
Graham crackers	3 squares	15
Popcorn	3 cups	15
Potato chips	1 oz. (10-15 chips)	15
Tortilla chips	1 oz. (10-15 chips)	20
	Portion size	Carbs (g)
7. Sauces and condiments		
Barbeque sauce	2 Tbsp.	15
Fruit jam/jelly	1 Tbsp.	15
Honey	1 Tbsp.	15
Honey mustard	2 Tbsp.	7

Ketchup	¼ cup	15
Mayonnaise, fat free	2 Tbsp.	5
Peanut butter	2 Tbsp.	6
Ranch, fat free	2 Tbsp.	8
Salsa	¼ cup	6
Sugar	1 Tbsp.	15
Sweet and sour sauce	2-3 Tbsp.	15