

Get carb smart.

Learn the basics about carbs and diabetes.



Doesn't it seem as though everyone is talking about carbs these days?

From food packages and restaurant menus to magazine articles and perhaps even your doctor—carbs are mentioned everywhere. And if you have diabetes, you may also have heard about counting them.

So what is a carb? And when push comes to shove, what are you supposed to do with them? The following pages were created to offer you some basic knowledge and specific guidance about counting carbohydrates. We realize that paying attention to what you eat and counting carbohydrates isn't really anyone's idea of fun, but it can be a powerful way to keep your blood glucose levels stable—which is key to living well with diabetes.

To learn more about carbs, read on. And you can always visit us at healthsimple.com for additional information and support. We wish you the best of health.

We want you healthy!

What's a carb?

Carbs are the fiber, sugars and starches that are present in many foods. When you consume food with carbs, you supply energy to your body and your blood glucose levels rise.

Are all carbs the same?

Actually no. Some carbs are healthier than others. Healthy carbs are found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods. Because these foods provide essential vitamins, minerals and fiber, they are important for good health and should be eaten every day. Less healthy carbs, like those found in cookies and candy, should be a limited part of your diet.

Why should I keep track of carbs?

If you have diabetes or pre-diabetes, keeping an eye on your carb consumption can help you keep your blood glucose levels as close to normal as possible. This can help you feel better and reduce your risk of complications. If you use insulin, carb counting can help you calculate your insulin doses.

What's in your glass?

Think before you drink. It can be shocking to realize how many carbs you consume through the drinks you sip all day. By making an easy shift to lower- or no-carb options, you can improve your health dramatically—without feeling deprived. Try these ideas below and save your carb intake for the foods you truly love. (And while we're at it, let us put a plug in for WATER! It's the wonder drink.)



High carb	Low/no carb option
Regular Soda	Diet Soda
Juice	Lite Juice

How do I count carbs?

There are two ways to track the carbs you eat.

- One method is to count *carbohydrate grams*. Most packaged foods list carbohydrate grams per serving on the Nutrition Facts panel.
- Another option is to track *carbohydrate choices*. One carb choice contains approximately 15 grams of carbohydrates.

Refer to the handy carb conversion chart on the following page to see the relationship between carb grams and carb choices at a glance. Your healthcare professional may have a preferred method for you.



Here's an example.

One small apple has 15 grams of carbohydrates, which is also known as 1 carb choice.

They're the same thing!

How many carbs should I have?

Good question! And the best person to answer it is your doctor, registered dietitian or diabetes educator. As a rule of thumb, experts suggest for adults:

Meal	45–60g (3–4 carb choices)
Snack	15–30g (1–2 carb choices)

For children, recommendations vary significantly, depending on the child's weight and nutritional needs for growth. So you'll definitely want to talk to your healthcare provider about the right amount of carbs. If you use insulin, your healthcare provider will help you learn how to count carbs and adjust your insulin doses.

What's the big deal about portions?

Carb counts are very much connected to the *amount* of the food you eat. You could have a small bagel or a big one—and the carb count would be different. When you have diabetes, it's important to get serious about measuring your portion sizes. Especially at first. Learn what an ounce of potato chips looks like—and a cup of macaroni and cheese. Once you get accurate (and comfortable), you can ease up on the weighing and measuring. But, don't forget to recheck portion accuracy from time to time.

Carb conversion chart

Do you prefer to track grams or choices? You choose. This chart will help you convert the numbers.

Total carbohydrate grams ÷ 15 = Carb choices.

Carb Grams		Carb Choices
0–5	=	0
6–10	=	½
11–20	=	1
21–25	=	1½
26–35	=	2
36–40	=	2½
41–50	=	3
51–55	=	3½
56–65	=	4
66–70	=	4½

Make it easier.

Here are some ways to make counting carbs easier. Learn more at healthsimple.com.

FLASHCARBS® Magnets

Colorful refrigerator magnets make it fun and easy to learn the carb counts of common foods—and provide a quick reference while cooking. They also encourage the entire household and care providers to be involved with meal planning and calculations. 48 magnets per set.



CARBWISE CHEAT SHEETS™

Pre-printed sticky notes simplify the mathematical process of counting carbs at mealtime. Worksheets reduce error and help you be consistent and honest with yourself! Pad of 100 Sheets.



Carb Count Stickers

Stickers can be used for labeling leftovers, bag lunch items or any foods packaged without nutritional information. They adhere to foil, plastic baggies and plastic containers. And they help organize and simplify meal-time calculations. Pad of 200 stickers.

