

## Tips to Get Started

### 1 | Know Your Carbs

The 1<sup>st</sup> step to carb counting is knowing where carbs come from. The 4 main sources of carbs in our diet are grains, fruits, milk & yogurt and sweets.

Reading the nutrition facts table is the most accurate way to see if a food contains carbohydrate.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 90 g serving (2 slices)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 170	
Fat 2.7 g	1 %
Saturated 0.5 g + Trans 0 g	5 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 200 mg	8 %
Carbohydrate 36 g	13 %
Fibre 6 g	24 %
Sugars 3 g	
Protein 8 g	
Vitamin A 1 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 16 %

Pay close attention to serving size. Is this the amount that you are planning to eat? If not, you may need to figure out the serving you're having by multiplying or dividing.

### 2 | Learn Your Servings

A carb serving or "choice" is defined as the amount of food that contains **15g of carbs**.

To learn the size of a carb serving you can use the nutrition facts table, the 'Beyond the Basics' handout, or use a visual estimation. Examples of choices:

**Grains: 1 choice** = 1 slice of bread, ¾ bagel, ½ an English muffin, ½ cup pasta, 1/3 cup of rice, ½ a medium potato

**Fruits: 1 choice** = 1 medium sized fruit, 1 small banana, 2 cups of strawberries, 15 grapes, 2 med kiwi, 2 med plums, ½ mango, ¼ cup dried fruit

**Milk & Yogurt: 1 choice** = 1 cup 1% milk, ½ cup chocolate milk, ¾ cup yogurt

**Is there such a thing as a 'good' carb?**

Yes! Counting carbs is just one half of the battle! Choosing good carbs will help you stay healthy. They help to control your:

- 1 | Blood Sugar
- 2 | Cholesterol
- 3 | Appetite
- 4 | Risk of Getting Heart Disease

**How do I choose a 'good' carb?**

- 1 | The glycemic index (GI) is a scale that ranks carb choices by how much they raise your blood glucose (sugar). This index helps us sort 'good' from 'bad'.
- 2 | Choose low-medium glycemic foods more often and limit high glycemic foods.
- 3 | Low-medium GI foods include whole wheat bread/pasta, barley, lentils, brown rice, oatmeal and sweet potatoes, vegetables, fruit and low-fat milk products.
- 4 | High GI choices include white bread, flaky cereals, short-grain rice, rice cakes, candies and sweets.

### 3 | Set Your Limits

Everyone's needs are different, a registered dietitian can help you determine how many carb choices you need each day. Otherwise, you can stick to the basics.

For example:

- if you have a small appetite, aim for 2-3 carb choices /meal
- if you have a larger appetite, choose 3-4 choices/ meal
- enjoy 1 carb choice for an afternoon or evening snack

Always remember to spread your carb choices throughout your day.

### 4 | Evaluate

Always monitor your blood sugars to evaluate how the foods you eat will affect your diabetes control.

If your blood sugars are too high 2 hours after you eat (>9 mmol/L), or too high before your next meal (>7 mmol/L), your carb intake may have been too high or your diabetes medication needs to be assessed.

## Carb Counting Tips

### 1| Use your label.

Always use the nutrition label, if available. This label is your most accurate source of information.

### 2| Count if large amount.

You may need to count root vegetables (carrots / squash) if you have >2 cups.

### 3| Factor in fibre.

Fibre does not raise blood sugar and should be subtracted from the total carbohydrate.

### 4| Account for sugar alcohols.

Sugar alcohols should also be subtracted from the total carbohydrate. Most (not all) sugar alcohols end in 'ol'. Examples include: mannitol, sorbitol, xylitol, polydextrose.

### 5| Be a creative detective.

Utilize food scales, books, and the internet to look up the carb content of food. Try the Salter Nutritional Scale to discover the carb count in a specific amount of your favourite foods.









Visit [www.calorieking.com](http://www.calorieking.com) to look up carbs in anything from fast food to home cooked meals. Look for books specifically designed for carb and calorie counting (e.g., Calorie King: Calorie, Fat & Carb Counter).

## Practice Makes Perfect

meals	food eaten	# of carbs	totals
<b>breakfast</b>	1 whole wheat (ww) English Muffin 2 tsp peanut butter ½ cup OJ	____g ____g ____g	____g
<b>snack</b>	¾ cup artificially sweetened yogurt	____g	____g
<b>lunch</b>	1 Tuna Salad sandwich (2 oz tuna, 2 ww bread, 2 tsp light mayo) ½ cup baby carrots 1 cup skim milk	____g ____g ____g	____g
<b>snack</b>	1/2 medium apple	____g	____g
<b>dinner</b>	3 oz chicken breast 1 cup salad 1 Tbsp low calorie dressing 1 cup rice 3 arrowroot cookies	____g ____g ____g ____g ____g	____g
<b>snack</b>	5 almonds 1 kiwi	____g ____g	____g

*Did you come up with 180 g of carbohydrate?*

## Servings at a Glance

1/3 cup	
1/2 cup	
1 cup	
2 cups vegetable serving	
1 medium fruit serving	
1 oz	
3 oz meat serving (without fingers)	
3 oz meat serving	
1 tsp fat serving	