Top Tips to Get Started

1. | Know Your Carbs

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

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

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

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 %

2. | Learn Your Servings

A carb serving or "choice" is defined as the amount of food that contains **15 g 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 (see back of handout). Examples of choices:

grains: 1 choice= 1 slice of bread, ¼ bagel, ½ of 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

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 ex:

- 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.

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** is a scale that ranks carb choices by how much they raise your blood glucose. This index helps us sort the good from the bad.
2. Choose low to medium glycemic foods more often.
3. Limit high glycemic foods.
4. Examples of **low –mediumglycemic index** foods include whole wheat bread & pasta, barley, lentils, brown rice, oatmeal and sweet potatoes. Most vegetables, fruit and low fat milk products have a low glycemic index too.
5. Examples of **high glycemic index** choices include white bread, flaky cereals, short-grain rice, rice cakes, candies and sweets.

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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.
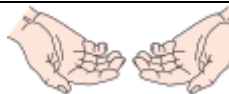
5. be a creative detective

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 to look up carbs in anything from fast food to home cooked meals. Look for books specifically designed for carb and calorie counting (ex: Calorie King: Calorie, Fat, & Carbohydrate Counter).

Practice Makes Perfect

Meals	Food Eaten	# of Carbs	Total
Breakfast	1 whole wheat (ww) English Muffin 2 tsp peanut butter ½ cup OJ	_____g _____g _____g	____**g**
Snack	¾ cup artificially sweetened yogurt	_____g	____**g**
Lunch	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**
Snack	1/2 medium apple	_____g	____**g**
Dinner	3 oz chicken breast 1 cup salad 1 Tbsp low calorie dressing 1 cup rice 3 arrowroot cookies	_____g _____g _____g _____g _____g	____**g**
Snack	5 almonds 1 kiwi	_____g _____g	____**g**

Did you come up with 180g of carbohydrate?

Servings at a Glance

1/3 cup	
½ cup	
1 cup	
2 cups vegetable serving	
1 medium fruit serving	
3 oz meat without fingers	
1 oz	
3 oz meat serving	
1 tsp fat serving	

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