

Advanced insulin management

Counting carbohydrates (meals and recipes)

A nutrition resource for living well with diabetes

When people think of diabetes, what usually comes to mind is that 'old rule against eating sweets'. However, today's dietary guidelines contain no 'forbidden' foods, which makes controlling your blood glucose much easier. The new guidelines are:

- > eat a variety of healthy foods
- > eat smaller amounts of protein foods and fewer high fat foods
- > balance the carbohydrate you eat with insulin and exercise.

If you use an insulin pump or take multiple insulin injections, you need to know how many grams of carbohydrate are in a meal in order to calculate how much rapid-acting insulin to take before you eat, using your insulin-to-carbohydrate ratio.



Menu planning - what are you going to eat at the meal?

You can determine the total carbohydrate content of a meal by adding up the carbohydrate content of individual foods. Use sources such as food labels, carbohydrate counter books and websites, such as www.calorieking.com.au.

Foods eaten	Quantity taken	Total carbohydrate
Weet-bix	2 biscuits	22.4g
Banana	140g	18g
Low fat milk	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	9g
Instant coffee, black	250ml	0g
Low fat milk	40ml	2g
	Total	51.2g

Practice carbohydrate counting using the following examples

Food choice	Grams of carbohydrate
Chicken schnitzel, 180g	
1 medium potato	
60 green peas	
70 grams of carrots	
100ml of gravy (from powder)	
300ml Diet Coke	
Total	



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What about recipes or home-made foods?

You may be thinking, what about recipes? How do I count the carbohydrates in homemade foods? Do I have to add together the carbohydrates for each separate ingredient?

The basic procedure

Calculating the carbohydrate content of any recipe involves four simple steps.

1. Look up and calculate the carbohydrate value of each ingredient in the recipe.
2. Add the value of each ingredient together.
3. Divide the total number of carbohydrates in the recipe by the number of servings the recipe makes.
4. Remember to make note of the total number of carbohydrates for the recipe, as the serving size may vary each time you make it (such as biscuits), or make a note on the recipe, telling you what the serving size is and how many grams of carbohydrate are in one serving (for example half a cup of potato salad). Then, the next time you make the recipe, you won't have to go through all the weighing procedures again.

Lasagne (eight serves)

Ingredients	Carbohydrates
500g lean beef mince	0g
1 medium onion diced	4.5g
1 medium green capsicum	3.5g
9 lasagne noodles 5cm x 8cm	117g
1 tablespoon sugar	15g
2 x 420g tins diced tomato	42g
500g light ricotta cheese	12.5g
500g grated mozzarella cheese	3.5g
500g freshly grated parmesan cheese	0g
2 x cloves of garlic	0.5g
10 x leaves of oregano	0.5g
10 x leaves of basil	0.5g
A pinch of salt	0g
250ml red wine	1g
Total	200.5g
Total per serve (8)	25g

Please note

Be extra careful when calculating the carbohydrate content in recipes for the first time, and don't forget to add on the carbohydrate content of any other food you eat with the meal, for example salad or garlic bread.

For more information

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