Simple Steps for Counting Carbohydrates

People with diabetes have the same nutritional needs as anyone else. The key is to eat well-balanced meals in the right amounts. Here are some general tips:

- Eat 3 meals daily. Ask your physician or dietitian if you should include an evening snack.
- Have consistent meal times each day and do not skip meals.
- The amount of carbohydrate eaten at each meal should be about the same each day.
- Follow proper portion sizes of foods.

Carbohydrate Counting Basics

Carbohydrate counting, or "carb counting", is a meal planning technique for managing your blood glucose levels. By keeping track of how many servings of carbohydrates you eat and controlling the amount you eat, you can keep your blood glucose levels in your target range. The best part about carb counting is that it is flexible, allowing you to eat a variety of foods. It may also help you understand how food choices affect your blood sugar.

- Carbohydrates are measured in grams.
- 15 grams of carbohydrate = 1 carbohydrate choice
- Carbohydrates from any food have about the same effect on blood glucose.
- Small portions of sweets or sugar can occasionally be used in place of other carbohydrate containing foods.
- Foods containing less that 5 grams of carbohydrate per serving are considered free foods.

Foods that Contain Carbohydrate

- Starchy foods like bread, cereal, rice, and crackers
- Fruit (including dried, frozen, and canned) and juice
- Milk and yogurt
- Dried beans like pinto beans and soy products like veggie burgers
- Starchy vegetables like potatoes and corn
- Sweets and snack foods like sodas, juice drinks, cake, cookies, candy, and chips

Non-starchy vegetables like carrots, lettuce and tomatoes contain small amounts of carbohydrate and will not affect your blood sugar unless you eat large amounts.

Client: _____

Dietitian: _____

Contact: _____

Notes: _____

_____

How Much Carbohydrate is in These Foods?

Reading food labels is a great way to know how much carbohydrate is in a food (15 grams of carbohydrate = 1 carbohydrate choice). For foods that do not have a label, you have to estimate how much carbohydrate is in it.

For example there is about 15 grams of carbohydrate in:

- 1 small piece of fresh fruit
- 1/2 cup of canned or frozen fruit
- 1 slice of bread or 1 tortilla
- 1 small pancake
- 1/2 cup of oatmeal
- 1/3 cup of pasta or rice
- 4-6 crackers
- 1/2 English muffin or hamburger bun
- 1 cup of milk
- 1/2 cup of black beans or starchy vegetable
- 2/3 cup of plain fat-free yogurt or yogurt sweetened with sugar substitutes
- 1/4 of a large baked potato
- 2 small cookies
- 2-inch square brownie or cake without frosting
- 1/2 cup ice cream or 1/4 cup sherbet
- 1 Tbsp syrup, jam, jelly, sugar or honey
- 2 Tbsp light syrup
- 6 chicken nuggets
- 1/2 cup of casserole
- 1 cup of soup
- 1/4 serving of a medium order of french fries

Suggested Meal Plan

Calories	1500	1800	2000
Breakfast			
Carbohydrate Choices	4	5	5
Grams carbohydrate	60	75	75
Lunch			
Carbohydrate Choices	3	4	5
Grams carbohydrate	45	60	75
Dinner			
Carbohydrate Choices	3	4	4
Grams carbohydrate	45	60	60
Evening Snack			
Carbohydrate Choices	2	2	3
Grams carbohydrate	30	30	45