

Carbohydrate counting: an Arabic quick guide

What are carbohydrate foods?

Carbohydrate foods, or carbs, are a source of fuel and nutrients for your body.

Carbs are:

- » **Sugars**, such as the natural sugar in fruit and milk or the added sugar in soft drinks and many packaged foods.
- » **Starches**, including grains such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, rice and other grains, foods made from these grains such as breads, pasta and breakfast cereals, starchy vegetables such as corn and potatoes; and dried beans, lentils, and peas.

Why is the amount of carbohydrate you eat important?

Once in the stomach, carbs get broken down into glucose, which raises your blood glucose levels. Therefore:

- » Eating or drinking large amounts at one time can lead to high blood glucose levels.
- » Eating too little, or skipping a meal can lead to low blood glucose levels, known as hypoglycaemia (a hypo). This can occur if you are on insulin or certain other diabetes medications.

How to count carbohydrates

Counting carbs is simply keeping track of the amount you eat in your meals, snacks, and drinks across the day.

An exchange, has around 15 grams of carbs.

1 exchange
=
15 grams of carbohydrate



How much should you eat?

This depends on your age, gender, weight and activity levels.

As a general guide:

	Carbohydrate grams (g) at main meals	Exchanges
Women	30g - 45g	2-3
Men	45g - 60g	3-4

Do you need to eat snacks?




Most people who need to take insulin or other glucose-lowering medications do not need snacks through the day or before bed to prevent a hypo. However, for some people a snack may be recommended. Please talk to your diabetes health professional about whether this applies to you.

If you wish to include snacks in your meal plans, please talk to your dietitian about how to best do this.




For adults requiring a carb snack, a general guide is to aim for 1–2 carb exchanges per snack (15–30g of carbs).

Sample meal plans

Here are two examples of what carb counting looks like. Each meal has three (3) exchanges and each snack has one (1). The carb foods are in **bold**.

Meal	Food	Carbohydrate Exchanges
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup foul moudamas • $\frac{1}{3}$ whole wheat Lebanese bran bread (small, 18cm diameter) • sliced tomato, cucumber and rocket OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 tablespoons low-fat labneh, • 1 thin whole wheat Lebanese bread (large, 26cm diameter) • 2-4 olives, sliced tomatoes, cucumber 	 3
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 small banana OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup laban (low-fat natural yoghurt, 260g) + 30g unsalted, dry-roasted nuts 	 1
Lunch	<p>Mouloukhia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of Mouloukhia/Bamie or green beans with • a palm-sized piece of grilled/boiled chicken (100g cooked) or beef or lamb pieces (100g cooked) • $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cooked brown basmati rice* OR <p>Chicken skewers and tabbouli</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lean chicken tenderloins (100g cooked) served with $\frac{2}{3}$ whole wheat Lebanese bran bread (small, 18cm diameter) • 1 cup tabbouli 	 3











Sample meal plans – continued

Meal	Food	Carbohydrate Exchanges
Snack	<p>4 pitted dates and 30g unsalted dry roasted walnuts (about 13 whole walnuts)</p> <p>OR</p> <p>1 medium orange</p>	 <p>1</p>
Evening meal	<p>Kafta and fattoush</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arayes (palm-sized or 100g raw kafta) OR 2 large eggs • on 1 regular wholemeal pita pocket • Fattoush made with 1 1/2 cups of salad vegetables and 1/3 whole wheat Lebanese bran bread, toasted (small, 18cm diameter) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3/4 thin wholemeal Lebanese (large, 26cm diameter) bread • 1-2 tablespoons hummus • 2-4 olives, tomato, cucumber, rocket/lettuce 	 <p>3</p>
Snack	<p>2 cups of Ayran + a handful of cherry tomatoes and 1 small cucumber</p> <p>OR</p> <p>1 medium pear</p>	 <p>1</p>

Carbohydrate exchanges

Here are exchanges of foods that have around **15 grams of carbohydrate**. Use as a general guide only.






Bread and bread products

				
½ pita 'pocket' bread (25g) or wholegrain wrap (35g) or regular size thin Lebanese bread (20cm) (35g)	¼ of large size thin wholemeal Lebanese bread (26cm diameter) (30g) or pita bread (20g)	⅓ khubuz shrak (markook or saj) (diameter 60cm paper thin unleavened bread) (25g) or khubuz qameh kamel small (brown whole wheat bran bread, diameter 18cm) (30g)	½ small khubuz tannour (brown bran bread, diameter 18cm) (20g)	½ khubuz enkhaleh (18cm diameter) (30g)
				
½ Turkish bread roll (40g)	1 regular slice of bread or fruit bread (35g)	½ bread roll (35g) or English muffin (40g)	2-4 medium multigrain crispbreads (25g)	1 small roti /chapati (15cm in diameter) (40g)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ¼ Afghan bread (40g) • ¼ bagel (30g) • ⅓ khubuz taboon (47cm diameter) (30g) 				


Breakfast cereals

				
⅓ cup raw rolled oats (30g)	¼ cup natural muesli (30g)	1½ wheat biscuit type cereal (25g)	½ cup flake type cereal with dried fruit (20g)	½ cup porridge (oats cooked with water) (130g)

Rice/pasta/grains/flour






				
⅓ cup cooked burghul (90g) or barley (65g)	¼ cup cooked rice* (50g) or couscous (55g) or semolina, cooked in water (60g)	⅓ cup or 2 tablespoons freekeh, uncooked (25g)	½ cup cooked pasta (50g) or quinoa (95g)	2 tablespoons flour/ corn flour (20g)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1½ tablespoons uncooked polenta (25g) • ⅓ cup cooked noodles (rice/egg/soba, buckwheat or vermicelli) (55g) • ⅓ cup or 2 tablespoons maftool/ moghrabieh, uncooked (25g) • ½ cup or 6 tablespoons wheat germ (qameh) (50g) 				

Starchy vegetables











		
1 small potato (100g) or 1/2 cup mashed	1/2 cup orange sweet potato, raw (100g)	½ cup corn kernels (90g) or 1 medium cob (170g)

* One exchange of cooked rice can range from ¼ to ⅓ cup depending on the type of rice and the way it is cooked and packed.






Legumes

				
1/2 cup cooked or canned bean mix (95g), chickpeas (85g), kidney beans (95g), cannellini beans (130g), or baked beans (140g)	3/4 cup cooked or canned lentils (140g)	2 whole falafels (80g)	1/2 cup or 6 tablespoons hummus (125g)	1/2 cup fava beans cooked from dried beans (100g)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.15 cup uncooked loubieh (black-eyed beans) (30g) • 1/4 cup uncooked lima beans (45g) 				

Fruit

				
1 small or 1/2 large banana (130g)	1/2 small mango (100g)	2 medium mandarins (150g)	1/2 medium pomegranate (120g)	10 lychees (100g)
				
1 1/2 cups (250g) diced rockmelon or watermelon or honeydew	2 kiwifruits (170g)	1/2 cup grapes (100g)	1 medium apple, orange (160g) or pear (150g)	1 cup diced pineapple (190g) or papaya (250g)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 large grapefruit (300g) • 3 large apricots or plums (200g) • 1 cup or 20 cherries (150g) • 4 dates, dried and pitted (20g) or 1 medium medjool date (25g) • 4 guavas (360g) • 20 small loquats (260g) • 1/4 quince (110g) • 3 fresh figs (150g) • 2 cups mulberries (300g) or 1 cup blackberries (200g) • 1/4 medium custard apple (100g) • 6 prunes (50g) • 1 large peach or nectarine (200g) • 6 pieces dried apple (20g) • 2-3 strips dried mango (20g) • 1 1/2 tablespoons or 20 sultanas (25g) • 1 persimmon (75g) 				

Milk/milk products and alternatives

				
1 cup low- or full-fat milk, or soy milk (250ml)	250g low- or full-fat natural yoghurt	100g low- or full-fat fruit yoghurt	1/2 cup low-fat custard	1/2 cup evaporated skim milk (135g)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 cups laban ayran • 1 cup laban (low-fat yoghurt) (260g) • 1/2 cup powdered skim milk (35g) • 1 1/2 cups goat's milk (375ml) 				

Other/ Miscellaneous Food

				
3 cups air-popped corn (25g)	1 piece kibbeh (80g)	¼ manoush (meat, zaatar or cheese) (45g)	Sambousik or fatayer (50g)	2 vine leaves, stuffed with meat and rice (70g)






- 1 cup fattoush (200g)
- 1 cup tabbouli (170g)

Sauces, condiments and/or spreads¹

	
1 tablespoon jam (20g)	3 teaspoons honey (20g)

- 3 tablespoons or ¼ cup tomato sauce/ketchup (65g)
- 1½ tablespoons bbq sauce (35g)
- 1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses (20g)

Occasional Foods

					
3 teaspoons sugar (15g)	1 small maamoul (30g)	1 small, or ½ regular, piece baklava (25g)	1 qatayef (diameter 10cm, thickness 0.25cm) (40g)	4 squares milk chocolate (25g)	1 small piece kaak (breadstick) (30g)

- 1 cup plain potato chips (25g)
- 1 small piece of cake, unfilled, without icing (30g)
- ¼ cup muhalabiyeh
- 1 small piece nammoura/basbousa (25g)
- 1 small piece of simismiyeh (30g)
- 2 tablespoons or 7 teaspoons chocolate drinking powder (25g)
- ¼ cup rice pudding (60g)
- 1 medium scoop of plain vanilla ice-cream (70g)
- 1 piece barazeq (30g)

Find a dietitian

If you have any questions, ask your dietitian. To find one, go to dietitiansaustralia.org.au or contact Dietitians Australia. Call **1800 812 942** or email info@dietitiansaustralia.org.au

Carbohydrate counting is a tool to better manage your diabetes.

The NDSS and you

A wide range of services and support is available through the NDSS to help you manage your diabetes. This includes information on diabetes management through the NDSS Helpline and website. The products, services and education programs available can help you stay on top of your diabetes.