

# Carbohydrate counting: a Traditional Chinese 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	<b>Congee with chicken and mushroom</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ½ cup cooked jasmine rice* mixed with ⅓ cup raw rolled oats</li> <li>• 1 cup shiitake mushrooms rehydrated and thinly sliced</li> <li>• Palm-sized piece of chicken with skin removed, thinly sliced</li> </ul>	 3
	OR <b>Dumplings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6-8 pieces of steamed or boiled pork and vegetable-filled <b>dumplings</b> with vegetable-based side dishes like black fungus and Chinese cucumber salads.</li> <li>• 1 cup of <b>low-fat milk</b> or <b>soy milk</b> (e.g. SoGood Soy Milk)</li> </ul>	
Snack	½ cup plain <b>low-fat yoghurt</b> with ½ cup frozen <b>mixed berries</b> OR 1 piece of <b>fresh fruit</b> (e.g. an apple)	 1
Lunch	<b>Chinese stir fries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Palm-sized piece of lean pork, sliced and stir-fried</li> <li>• green chillies</li> <li>• 2 cups stir-fried mixed vegetables (snow peas, lotus and carrot slices, etc.)</li> <li>• Served with ¾ cup <b>cooked rice</b>* (e.g. Doongara Clever rice)</li> </ul>	 3
	OR <b>Chow Mein</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Palm-sized piece of lean beef, sliced</li> <li>• 1 cup <b>Hokkien noodles</b></li> <li>• Stir fried with 1½ cups mixed seasonal vegetables (e.g. capsicum, mushrooms, onions and snow peas)</li> </ul>	

\* 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.

## Sample meal plans – continued






Meal	Food		Carbohydrate Exchanges
Snack	1 piece of fresh <b>fruit</b> (e.g. a small banana) OR 5 steamed or roasted <b>chestnuts</b> (50g)		1
Evening meal	<p><b>Braised lean beef brisket with Chinese radish</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef brisket (palm-sized) cooked with ½ cup radish, cut into chunks</li> <li>• 1 cup broccoli cut into small florets, stir-fried with minced garlic, and garnished with sliced red chillies</li> <li>• 1 serve of light soup made with seaweed and pork bone</li> <li>• ¾ cup cooked <b>mixed grain</b> or <b>long grain rice</b>* (e.g. Doongara Clever Rice)</li> </ul> OR <p><b>Steamed fish with bok choy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steamed hand-sized whole fish (e.g. barramundi or snapper) topped with thinly sliced ginger, shallot and red chillies</li> <li>• 2 handfuls bok choy stir-fried with garlic sauce</li> <li>• Served with ¾ cup cooked <b>mixed grain rice</b>*</li> </ul>		3
Snack	1 glass (250ml) of <b>low-fat milk</b> or <b>soy milk</b> (e.g. SoGood Soy Milk) OR 1 piece of <b>fresh fruit</b> (e.g. a <b>medium apple</b> )		1

\* 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.









## Carbohydrate exchanges

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

### Bread and breakfast cereal

				
1 regular slice bread or fruit bread (35g)	½ wholegrain wrap (35g)	1 small or ½ large mantou (steamed bun) (30g)	1 small roti or chapati (15cm in diameter) (40g)	⅓ cup raw rolled oats (30g)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 crumpet – round shape (40g)</li> <li>• ½ bread roll (35g)</li> <li>• ¼ bagel (30g)</li> <li>• ⅓ Turkish bread roll (40g)</li> <li>• 2 small or 1 large steamed pork bun (60g)</li> <li>• 2-4 medium multigrain rectangular crackers (25g)</li> <li>• ¼ cup natural muesli (30g)</li> <li>• 1½ wheat biscuit type cereal (25g)</li> <li>• ½ cup flake type cereal with dried fruit (30g)</li> <li>• ½ cup porridge (oats cooked with water) (130g)</li> </ul>				

### Rice, noodles, grains and flour



			
1½ tablespoons raw polenta (25g)	⅓ cup cooked noodles (egg, rice, vermicelli, soba or buckwheat) (55g), wheat noodles (Hokkien, or Udon) (55g), barley (65g)	¼ cup cooked rice* (50g) or couscous (55g)	½ cup cooked pasta (50g), quinoa (95g), sweet potato noodles (Dangmyeon) (50g) or millet (70g)
			
7-9 (30g) rice cakes (sliced type)	1½ rice paper wrappers (45g)	2 tablespoons flour or corn flour (20g)	½ roll sushi general (50g)

### Starchy vegetables









			
1 small potato (100g) or ½ cup mashed	½ cup orange sweet potato, raw (100g)	½ cup sweet corn kernels (90g) or 1 medium cob (170g)	½ cup taro, diced cooked (60g)

\* 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






			
½ cup cooked or canned bean mix (95g), chickpeas (85g), kidney beans (95g), cannellini beans (130g), or baked beans (140g)	¾ cup cooked or canned lentils (140g)	¾ cup dried soya beans (130g)	1 cup edamame beans (190g)

## Fruit



			
1 medium apple or pear (150g)	1 small or ½ large banana (130g)	1½ cups diced rockmelon or watermelon or honeydew (250g)	½ cup grapes (100g)
			
2 kiwifruits (170g)	10 lychees (100g)	2 medium mandarins (150g)	½ small mango (100g)

- 3 large apricots (170g)
- 1/4 cup durian, fresh, peeled (60g)
- 4 dates, dried and pitted (20g)
- 6 pieces dried apple (20g)
- 8 dried apricot halves (30g)
- 2-3 strips dried mango (20g)
- dried durian (20g)
- 1½ tablespoons or 20 sultanas (25g)
- 1 persimmon (75g)
- 1 cup or 20 cherries (150g)
- 1 cup diced papaya (250g)

## Milk, milk products and alternatives

				
1 cup low- or full-fat milk or soy milk (250g)	250g low- or full-fat natural yoghurt	100g low- or full-fat fruit yoghurt	½ cup evaporated skim milk (135g)	⅓ cup powdered skim milk (35g)

## Other/ miscellaneous food

	
3 cups air-popped corn (25g)	5 chestnuts (50g)

## Sauces, condiments and/or spreads

- 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce (40g)
- 3 tablespoons oyster sauce (60g)
- 1 tablespoon sweet chilli sauce (30g)
- 1½ tablespoons teriyaki sauce (35g)
- 2 tablespoons chili paste (Korean) (40g)
- 3 tablespoons or ¼ cup tomato sauce (65g)
- 1½ tablespoons bbq sauce (35g)

## Occasional foods

				
1 cup plain potato chips (25g)	4 squares milk chocolate (25g)	1 tablespoon jam (20g)	3 teaspoons honey (20g)	3 teaspoons sugar (15g)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 tablespoons chocolate drinking powder (25g)</li> <li>• 2 plain sweet biscuits (20g)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 small piece of cake, unfilled, without icing (30g)</li> <li>• 1 regular or 2 mini spring rolls, fried (60g)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 medium scoop of plain vanilla ice-cream (70g)</li> </ul>		

## Find a dietitian

If you have any questions, ask your dietitian. To find one, go to [dietitiansaustralia.org.au](http://dietitiansaustralia.org.au) or contact Dietitians Australia. Call **1800 812 942** or email [info@dietitiansaustralia.org.au](mailto: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.