

# Carbohydrate counting: a Vietnamese 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>Egg Salad 'Banh Mi' Sandwich</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 mini <b>multigrain bread rolls</b></li> <li>• 1 scrambled egg</li> <li>• Shredded carrots</li> <li>• 1 cup of bean sprouts</li> <li>• 1 cup of carrots thinly sliced</li> <li>• Spring onions, coriander and birdseye chillies (to taste), thinly sliced</li> </ul>	3
	OR <b>Chicken Congee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> cup of cooked <b>long grain rice</b>* (e.g. Doongara Clever Rice)</li> <li>• Palm-sized piece of diced chicken</li> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> cup of chopped onions and chives</li> <li>• Garlic or ginger as needed</li> </ul>	
Snack	1 cup of seasonal <b>fruit salad</b> OR $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of plain <b>low-fat yoghurt</b> with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen mixed berries	1
Lunch	<b>Prawn rice paper rolls</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 <b>rice paper wrappers</b></li> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{3}</math> cup of cooked <b>vermicelli</b></li> <li>• <math>1\frac{1}{2}</math> cups of prawns, flesh only</li> <li>• 2 cups of cucumber, lettuce and carrots thinly sliced</li> <li>• Mint leaves and coriander leaves as needed</li> </ul>	3
	OR <b>Pan-fried pork chops with green vegetables served with rice</b> * <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Palm-sized piece of pork chops fat trimmed</li> <li>• 1 cup of bok choy</li> <li>• 1 cup of broccoli florets</li> <li>• <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> cup of cooked <b>long grain white rice</b>* (e.g. Doongara Clever Rice)</li> </ul>	



\* One exchange of cooked rice can range from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  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 small <b>banana</b> OR 1 cup of seasonal <b>fruit salad</b>		1
Evening meal	<b>Beef pho noodles soup</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup cooked <b>flat rice noodles</b></li> <li>• Palm-sized piece of lean beef</li> <li>• 1 cup of bean sprouts</li> <li>• 1 cup of mint and basil leaves</li> <li>• ¼ onion thinly sliced</li> <li>• Lime quarters to garnish</li> <li>• Red chilli sliced as needed</li> </ul> OR <b>Steamed rice with sweet and sour fish soup</b> Fish soup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand-sized salmon fillet</li> <li>• 1 tomato quartered</li> <li>• ½ cup bean sprouts</li> <li>• Rice paddy herbs to taste</li> </ul> Served with ¾ cup of cooked <b>long grain rice</b> (e.g. Doongara Clever Rice)		3
Snack	1 cup of calcium-fortified <b>soy milk</b> or <b>low-fat milk</b> OR A medium fresh <b>orange</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)	1/2 wholegrain wrap (35g)	1 small or 1/2 large mantou (steamed bun) (30g)	1 small roti or chapati (15cm in diameter) (40g)	1/3 cup raw rolled oats (28g)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 crumpet – round shape (40g)</li> <li>• 1/2 bread roll (35g)</li> <li>• 1/4 bagel (30g)</li> <li>• 1/3 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>• 1/4 cup natural muesli (30g)</li> <li>• 1 1/2 wheat biscuit type cereal (25g)</li> <li>• 1/2 cup flake type cereal with dried fruit (30g)</li> <li>• 1/2 cup porridge (oats cooked with water) (130g)</li> </ul>				

### Rice, noodles, grains and flour





			
1 1/2 tablespoons raw polenta (25g)	1/3 cup cooked noodles (egg, rice, vermicelli, soba or buckwheat) (65g), wheat noodles (Hokkien, or Udon) (55g), barley (65g)	1/4 cup cooked rice* (50g) or couscous (55g)	1/2 cup cooked pasta (50g), quinoa (95g), sweet potato noodles (Dangmyeon) (50g) or millet (70g)
			
7-9 (30g) rice cakes (sliced type)	1 1/2 rice paper wrappers (45g)	2 tablespoons flour or corn flour (20g)	1/2 roll sushi general (50g)

### Starchy vegetables




			
1 small potato (100g) or 1/2 cup mashed	1/2 cup orange sweet potato, raw (100g)	1/2 cup sweet corn kernels (90g) or 1 medium cob (170g)	1/2 cup taro, diced cooked (60g)

\* One exchange of cooked rice can range from 1/4 to 1/3 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 or plums (200g)
- 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, soy milk or buttermilk (250ml)	250g low-fat 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 or 7 teaspoons 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.