

Diabetes: Constant Carbohydrate Meal Plan

With the constant carbohydrate meal plan, you count carb choices and eat the same number of carb choices at each meal or snack. You take insulin or other diabetes medicines at the same times and in the same amounts each day. The constant carbohydrate plan may be easier to follow than other plans because you do not need to track food groups or adjust your insulin with meals.

What are carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates, also called carbs, are a source of energy for your body. There are three basic types of carbs: starches, sugars, and dietary fiber.

- Starches are not digested and turned into energy as fast as sugars. Starch is found in plant-based foods such as pasta, bread, cereals, rice, potatoes, beans, and corn.
- Sugars such as glucose and fructose raise blood sugar very quickly. Sugar is found in foods such as fruit, milk, soft drinks, baked goods, and candy.
- Dietary fiber is the part of plants that cannot be digested. Fiber is found in whole-grain bread and pasta, beans, peas, leafy vegetables, raisins, prunes, apples, and berries.

You can tell how much carbohydrate is in a food by reading the nutrition facts. You can find nutrition facts on the food label, in nutrition books or apps for your smartphone or computer, or on the internet. Fifteen grams of carbs equals 1 carb choice. A gram is a way to measure how much something weighs.

Carbs raise your blood sugar level more than protein or fat. If you use insulin, you need to balance how much insulin you take with the amount of carbs you eat. This helps keep your blood sugar at a healthy level and helps prevent many health problems.

How does the constant carbohydrate plan work?

Your healthcare provider or dietitian will tell you how many carb choices you should eat, based on how many calories you need each day. Too many carbs at one time can make your blood sugar go too high, and too few carbs can make your blood sugar go too low. Too many calories can cause you to gain weight.

The amount of food you eat at a meal or snack may change depending on how much you exercise. You may need more food before you exercise. You may also need to eat more or less based on your insulin dose and blood sugar level. This plan is easy to follow if you eat and exercise about the same amount every day.

Which foods have carbohydrates?

Food groups that have carbohydrates include:

- Starchy foods (breads, cereals, rice, pasta, and vegetables such as corn and potatoes)
- Fruits

- Milk and yogurt
- Sugary foods

Eat only small amounts of sugary foods for a healthy diet. Serving sizes depend on the food. One tablespoon of sugar equals 1 carb choice. A sweetened drink may equal 2 or more carb choices. Check the nutrition facts label on the package to see how many grams of carbohydrate are in a serving.

Meat, fats, and vegetables do not affect your blood sugar in the same way as carbs. However, these foods do count toward your daily calories. Choose healthy kinds of meat and fat, and plenty of nonstarchy vegetables.

- Meats are protein. Eat meat that is lean and do not eat too much meat.
- Do not eat a lot of fats such as butter, oils, salad dressing, mayonnaise, bacon, and cream cheese.
- Eat nonstarchy vegetables such as lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, cucumbers, and celery. These vegetables do not count toward your daily carbs.

For books that help you with carb choices, exchange food groups, and other information to help manage diabetes, contact:

- The American Diabetes Association
<http://www.shopdiabetes.org/Categories/8-Diabetes-Books.aspx>
800-232-6455

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