

Diabetes: Understanding Carbohydrates

Your body needs food that contain carbs (carbohydrates) to sustain energy, but carbs raise blood sugar levels higher and faster than other kinds of food. Most dietitians recommend that 45% of your daily calories come from carbs.

Starches

Starches are found in grains, some vegetables, and beans. Grain products include bread, pasta, cereal, and tortillas. Starchy vegetables include potatoes, peas, corn, lima beans, yams, and squash. Kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, garbanzo beans, and lentils also contain starches.

Sugars

Sugars are found naturally in many foods. Or sugar can be added. Foods that contain *natural* sugar include fruits and fruit juices, dairy products, honey, and molasses. *Added* sugars are found in most desserts, processed foods, candy, regular soda, and fruit drinks.

Fiber

Fiber comes from plant foods. Most fiber isn't digested by the body. Instead of raising blood sugar levels like other carbs, it actually keeps blood sugar from rising too fast. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, peas, and many nuts.

Carb Counting

You can learn to figure out how many carbohydrates you are eating every day. Ask your doctor to teach you a technique called "carb counting." This system helps you keep track of the carbohydrates you eat each meal. There are different ways to do carb counting. Basic carb counting is described below.

When counting carbohydrates, one serving of a starch, fruit, or dairy product counts as one "carb." Each carb is about 15 grams of carbohydrates. For example: 1 slice of bread (1 serving of starch) = 15 grams.