

## How You Can Eat Healthy and Watch Carbohydrates

One important thing you can do to live well is getting to or staying at a healthy weight. Doing that is not always easy, and it takes time and effort.

To get to a healthy weight, you need to make sure you are eating a good balance of carbohydrates, fat and protein, and choose real foods that aren't processed, like meat, fish, cheese, eggs, vegetables, fruits, milk, yogurt, nuts, beans and whole grains. These kinds of food are good fuel for your body, and are healthier than junk food, which is nutritionally pretty empty.

Sticking to a healthy diet and watching your carbohydrate levels can help you lose weight or stay at the right weight. This can also lower your risks for lots of health conditions, like diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease.

#### What are carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are part of your food that your body uses for energy. They are made of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, which is where they get their name.

There are two types of carbohydrates:

- Simple, which you get from food with sugar like candy, fruit, milk, syrup, soft drinks, honey or jam/jelly
- Complex, which you get from food with starches and fiber like potatoes, corn, beans, lentils, peas, oatmeal, pasta or whole-grain bread



#### What do carbohydrates do?

When you eat carbohydrates, your body breaks them down into blood sugar, called glucose. Your body uses glucose to feed your cells. Whenever you eat food that has more than five grams of carbohydrates in it, your blood sugar levels go up. When your blood sugar levels go up, your pancreas releases a hormone called insulin. Insulin lowers your blood sugar levels. But, insulin is also a major hormone driving fat storage and fat burning. Because of this, when you are trying to lose weight, it's important for you to control how much insulin your body makes. You can do this through your diet and food choices.

#### Why do I need to watch carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are the main part of your food that affect how much insulin your body makes, and insulin is important for helping you control your weight because it affects how much fat gets burned and how much fat gets stored in your body tissues.

Food that's high in fat or protein, like meat or cheese, doesn't have the same effect on your blood sugar and insulin levels, so watching your carbohydrates is important for losing weight or staying at a healthy weight.

- If you eat fewer carbohydrates » your blood sugar doesn't get as high » your body doesn't need to make as much insulin » to give you energy, your body burns your stored fat » you can lose weight
- If you eat too many carbohydrates » your blood sugar goes up » your body has to make more insulin to adjust for it » you don't need to burn as much fat » the fat gets stored in your body » you can gain weight

#### How can I know how many carbohydrates I am eating?

An easy way you can keep track of what you are eating is to keep a food diary. You can write this down in a real diary, or use an online tracker or app. When you write down what you eat and think about what you've already had before your next meal, you're going to be more mindful about your food choices. This will also make it easier to look up nutritional information for your food and keep it stored in one place.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana has a food diary option on the wellness portal for your online member account, which you can log into at www.bcbsla.com/ wellness or through your BCBSLA app for Apple or Android phones. If you have not signed up for your online member account yet, go to www.bcbsla.com/activate and register today, or you can download the BCBSLA app from the App Store or Google Play.

There are several free apps like My Fitness Pal<sup>®</sup>, Calorie Counter by Spark People<sup>®</sup>, Lose It<sup>®</sup> or Fat Secret<sup>®</sup>, and devices like Fitbits<sup>®</sup>, which you can also use to track your food and exercise. Weight Watchers<sup>®</sup> offers a paid app that you can use as a food diary<sup>\*</sup>.

This guide gives you more information about how many carbohydrates are in common foods, to make it easier for you to keep track of what you are eating.

\*These are independent companies from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana and its subsidiaries. This text is provided for informational purposes only and is not an endorsement on our behalf of any products or services these companies offer.

#### **Size Guidelines**

When it comes to your food choices, portion size matters! To know exactly how much of something you are eating, you can use measuring cups, spoons, a food scale or similar items to set portions. This lets you see what a portion of that food looks like. Keep doing this until you

#### Carbohydrates by Category

The sections in this guide give you nutritional information about common foods from the five areas that tend to have more carbohydrates:

#### These Foods = Carbohydrates

- Starches/Grains · Sweets/Desserts
- Fruits
  Toppings/Extras
- Milk/Dairy

The guide also has information about vegetables, as well as foods that are high in proteins or fats, but low in carbohydrates.

You'll notice some foods are listed in more than one area. That's because they contain the same or close-to-thesame amounts of carbohydrates, protein and/or fat, and you should think about that when choosing what to eat. get a good idea of the weights and volumes of different foods you eat. Measuring foods at home can also make you feel more comfortable with estimating portion sizes in restaurants.

But, you may not always have measuring tools handy. The table below gives you some easy ways to figure out common portion sizes that food comes in.

#### Your Guide for Portion Size:



The foods are labeled **green**, **yellow** and **red** to help you see how much nutrition you get from them:

#### Green = this food is healthy and you can eat more of it

**Yellow** = this food has higher-than-normal levels of carbohydrates, fat or other things, and you need to watch how much of it you eat at a time

**Red** = these foods should not be eaten every day – enjoy in moderation

This guide is to help you learn general information. You should talk to your doctor or to a dietitian about any changes you want to make to your diet or in your eating habits.

# **Starches and Grains**

With starchy foods, most of their calories come from carbohydrates. These foods are a good source of energy and also give you fiber, vitamins and minerals. But because they are higher in carbohydrates than other types of food, be mindful of how much you eat. When you are selecting the foods in this category, aim to choose items that list whole grains as the first ingredient.

Each serving from this list contains 15 grams carbohydrates, 0-3 grams protein, 0-1 gram fat and 80 calories.

GREEN STARCHY FOOD	ONE SERVING
Winter, acorn or butternut squash	1 cup
Sweet potato/yam	<sup>1</sup> /2 cup
Cooked beans (black, garbanzo/chickpeas, kidney, lima, navy, pinto or white)	½ cup
Cooked lentils (brown, green or yellow)	<sup>1</sup> /2 cup
Cooked peas (black-eyed or split)	<sup>1</sup> /2 cup
Quinoa, cooked	¹∕₃ cup
Couscous	¹∕₃ cup
Bulgur, cooked	1⁄2 cup

YELLOW STARCHY FOOD	ONE SERVING
Whole-wheat bread	1 slice (1 oz)
Rye bread	1 slice (1 oz)
Whole wheat hot dog/hamburger bun	1⁄2 bun
Cereal, cooked (oats, oatmeal)	1⁄2 cup
<b>Cereals, ready-to-eat</b> <i>Pick those with at least three grams of</i> <i>fiber and less than six grams of sugar</i>	<sup>3</sup> ⁄4 cup
Granola, low-fat	<sup>1</sup> /4 cup
Whole wheat cereal	¹⁄₃ cup
Brown rice	¹⁄₃ cup
Corn, cooked	1⁄2 cup
Corn on cob, large (5 oz)	1⁄2 cob

YELLOW STARCHY FOOD	ONE SERVING
Peas, green, cooked	1⁄2 cup
Whole-wheat English muffin	½ muffin
Popcorn (air-popped)	3 cups

RED STARCHY FOOD	ONE SERVING
Potato baked with skin	1/4 large (3 oz)
Pretzels	<sup>3</sup> /4 oz
White bread	1 slice (1 oz)
White English muffin	½ muffin
Cornbread	1¾ inch cube or 1½ oz
Bagel, large (about 4 oz)	1/4 bagel
Biscuit, 2½ inches across	1
White hot dog/hamburger bun	<sup>1</sup> /2 bun
Pancake (4 inches across, ¼ inch thick)	1
Pita pocket bread (6" across)	1/2
Roll, plain, small	1
Tortilla, corn or flour (6" across)	1
Waffle (4 inch square)	1
Pasta, cooked	¹⁄з cup
White rice	¹⁄з cup
Potato boiled, all kinds	<sup>1</sup> /2 cup
Potato mashed with milk and fat	<sup>1</sup> /2 cup
French fries (oven-baked)	1 cup
Round, butter-type crackers	6 crackers
Saltines	6 saltines
Graham cracker, 2½ inch square	3
Snack chips (tortilla chips, potato chips) fat-free or baked regular	15-20 chips 9-13 chips
Baked beans	¹⁄₃ cup

Fruits

Fruits are good sources of fiber, whether they are fresh, frozen or dried. Fruit juices contain very little fiber, so eat real fruit instead of juice whenever you can. For canned fruit, choose fruit packed in its own juice or light syrup.

Each serving from this list contains 15 grams carbohydrates, 0 grams fat, 0 grams protein and 60 calories.

GREEN FRUIT	ONE SERVING
Apple, unpeeled, small (4 oz)	1
Blackberries	<sup>3</sup> /4 cup
Blueberries	<sup>3</sup> /4 cup
Raspberries	1 cup
Strawberries (whole)	1¼ cup
Cantaloupe, cubed	1 cup
Cherries	12 cherries
Grapefruit, large	1/2
Grapes, small	17 grapes
Kiwi	1
Mango, small	½ fruit or 1 cup
Orange, small	1
Papaya cubed	½ fruit or 1 cup
Peaches (fresh, medium)	1
Pears (fresh, large)	1/2
Pineapple (fresh)	<sup>3</sup> /4 cup
Small plums	2
Watermelon	1 slice or 1¼ cup (cubes)
YELLOW FRUIT	ONE SERVING
Applesauce, unsweetened	1⁄2 cup
Banana, extra small	1

YELLOW FRUIT	ONE SERVING
Dried fruits (blueberries, cherries, cranberries, mixed fruit, raisins)	2 tbsp
Mandarin oranges, canned	<sup>3</sup> /4 cup
Dried prunes	3
RED FRUIT	ONE SERVING
Apple, grapefruit, orange, pineapple juice	1⁄2 cup
Fruit juice blends, 100% juice, grape juice, prune juice	¹⁄з cup

# Milk/Dairy

Dairy products like milk and yogurt are rich in calcium and protein, but they do have carbohydrates, too. Choose fat-free, low-fat and reduced-fat types for healthier options. These have less saturated fat and cholesterol than whole-milk products.

Each serving from this list contains 12 grams of carbohydrates and 8 grams protein. The calorie range for these is 90-146 per serving, and the fat range is 0-8 grams per serving.

GREEN DAIRY	ONE SERVING
Fat-free milk, buttermilk, acidophilus-enriched milk, Lactaid	1 cup
Evaporated milk	1⁄2 cup
Yogurt, plain or flavored with a low calorie sweetener	<sup>2</sup> /3 cup
Reduced-fat milk, acidophilus-enriched milk, Lactaid	1 cup
Greek yogurt	6 oz
Whole milk, buttermilk, goat's milk	1 cup
Soy milk, regular, plain	1 cup
YELLOW DAIRY	ONE SERVING
Smoothies, flavored, regular	10 oz

# Sweets/Desserts

The foods in this category tend to be high in carbohydrates and also do not have as many vitamins, minerals and fiber as other foods. These foods should be used as special treats, not something you eat every day. You should eat these less often if you are trying to lose weight.

Keep in mind that many sugar-free, fat-free and reduced-fat desserts are made with ingredients that contain extra carbohydrates, so check the Total Carbohydrate information on the food label to be aware of what you are eating.

Each serving from this list contains 15 grams of carbohydrates. They have very different amounts of

protein, fat and calories. Check the labels to know what's in each and what the right serving size is. Enjoy these in right-sized amounts for special occasions.

### DESSERT EXAMPLES

Brownie, cake, candy, chocolate, cookies, fruit juice bars, ice cream, muffins, pie, pudding, syrup, frozen yogurt

### Sample serving sizes:

Brownie - 2 inch square Packaged cookies = 2 cookies Ice cream = 1/2 cup Muffin = 1/4 of a regular 4 oz. muffin

# **Toppings/Extras**

These foods typically have fewer than 20 calories per serving, and five grams or fewer of carbohydrates. You can have up to three servings a day of these, and the foods listed without a serving size can be eaten whenever you like. For better carbohydrate control, spread your servings of these foods throughout the day.

GREEN TOPPINGS/EXTRAS	ONE SERVING
Gum (sugar-free)	as much as you want
Sugar substitutes (low calorie sweeteners)	as much as you want
Flavoring extracts	as much as you want
Garlic	as much as you want
Herbs, fresh or dried	as much as you want
Nonstick cooking spray	as much as you want
Spices	as much as you want
Worcestershire sauce	as much as you want

YELLOW TOPPINGS/EXTRAS	ONE SERVING
Gelatin, sugar-free or unflavored	-
Jam or jelly, light or no sugar added	2 tsp
Creamers nondairy, liquid nondairy, powdered	1 tbsp 2 tsp
Salad dressing regular	1 tbsp
Barbecue sauce	2 tsp
Catsup (ketchup)	1 tbsp
Mustard	-
Pickles, dill	1½ medium
Salsa	1⁄4 cup
Taco sauce	1 tbsp
Vinegar	-
Boullion, broth, consommé	-
Carbonated or mineral water, club soda	-
Coffee or tea	-
Diet soft drinks or sugar-free drink mixes	-

# Vegetables

You should try to eat at least two to three servings of non-starchy vegetables every day. The starchy vegetables, which were listed earlier in this guide, include corn, potatoes and yams. Non-starchy vegetables, like those listed here, are low in carbohydrates. These are some of the healthiest foods you can eat.

Eat a lot of different types of vegetables to benefit from a mix of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. A good way to do this is to eat different colors of vegetables every day – purple, green, red, yellow/orange and white vegetables all have different health benefits.

When you eat canned vegetables, choose no-salt-added versions or rinse regular canned vegetables before eating or cooking with them – that gets rid of extra salt.

In general, a single serving for these vegetables is:

- 1/2 cup of cooked vegetables or vegetable juice
- 1 cup of raw vegetables

## Each serving from this list contains 5 grams carbohydrates, 2 grams protein and 25 calories.

- Artichokes
- Asparagus
- Beans (green, wax, Italian)
- Brussels sprouts
- Broccoli
- Cabbage (green, bok choy, Chinese)
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Greens (collard, kale, mustard, turnip)
- Mushrooms, all kinds, fresh
- Okra
- Onions
- Pea pods
- Peppers (all varieties)
- Radishes
- Sauerkraut
- Spinach
- Squash (summer, crookneck, zucchini)
- Tomatoes, fresh and canned
- Tomato sauce
- Tomato/vegetable juice
- Water chestnuts



# Protein

Meat and meat substitute foods are rich in protein and lower in carbohydrates. Whenever possible, choose lean meats.

The portion sizes on this list are based on cooked weight, after the bone and any fat have been removed. For plant-based proteins and meat substitutes, there can be some different carbohydrate amounts, so read food labels carefully to be aware of what you are eating.

### **PLANT-BASED PROTEINS:**

Each serving from this list contains 7 grams protein and different amounts of carbohydrate, fat and calories. Check the food label to know what's in each.

FOOD	ONE SERVING
Beans, lentils, or peas (cooked)	<sup>1</sup> /2 cup
Hummus	¹∕з сир
Nut spreads: almond butter, cashew butter, peanut butter, soy nut butter	1 tbsp
Tofu	4 oz (1⁄2 cup)

### MEDIUM-FAT MEATS AND MEAT SUBSTITUTES:

Each serving from this list contains 0 grams carbohydrates, 7 grams protein, 4-7 grams fat and 75 calories.

FOOD	ONE SERVING
Beef: corned beef, ground beef, meatloaf, prime grades trimmed of fat (prime rib)	1 oz
Cheeses with 4-7 grams of fat per oz: feta, mozzarella, pasteurized processed cheese spread, reduced-fat cheeses, string cheese	1 oz
Egg	1
Pork, cutlet, shoulder roast	1 oz
Poultry, with skin or fried	1 oz
Ricotta cheese	<sup>1</sup> /4 cup
Sausage with 4-7 grams of fat per oz	1 oz

### LEAN MEATS AND MEAT SUBSTITUTES:

Each serving from this list contains 0 grams carbohydrates, 7 grams protein, 0-3 grams fat and 45 calories.

FOOD	ONE SERVING
Beef: Select or Choice grades: ground round, roast (chuck, rib, rump), round, sirloin, steak (cubed, flank, porterhouse, T-bone), tenderloin	1 oz
Cheeses with 3 grams of fat or less per oz	1 oz
Cottage cheese	1/4 cup
Egg whites	2
Fish, fresh or frozen, plain: catfish, cod, flounder, haddock, halibut, orange roughy, salmon, tilapia, trout, tuna, herring, mackerel, rainbow trout <i>These fish are high in omega 3 fatty acids</i>	1 oz
Hot dog with 3 grams of fat or less per oz	1
Pork, lean Canadian bacon Rib or loin chop/roast, ham, tenderloin Poultry, without skin	1 oz 1 oz 1 oz
Tuna, canned in water or oil, drained	1 oz
Sardines, canned in water or oil, drained	1 oz
Sardines, canned in water or oil, drained	1 oz

### HIGH-FAT MEATS AND MEAT SUBSTITUTES:

Each serving from this list contains 0 grams carbohydrates, 7 grams protein, 8+ grams fat and 100 calories.

FOOD	ONE SERVING
Bacon: Pork Turkey	2 slices 3 slices
Cheese, regular: American, bleu, brie, cheddar, hard goat, monterey jack, queso and Swiss	1 oz
Hot dog: beef, pork or combination	1
Pork sparerib	1 oz
Processed sandwich meats with 8 grams of fat or more per oz: bologna, pastrami, hard salami	1 oz
Sausage with 8 grams fat or more per oz: bratwurst, chorizo, Italian, knockwurst, Polish, smoked, summer	1 oz

# Fats

Despite what you have heard, fat isn't always bad for you. You get healthy benefits from some types of fat, and it's important for giving you energy. These foods higher in fat also tend to be lower in carbohydrates.

When you eat fattier foods, choose heart-healthy fats (the foods in the monounsaturated and polyunsaturated groups below) more often. Saturated fat foods are things you should enjoy in moderation, and you should avoid foods that contain trans-fat.

Examples of foods with trans-fat are doughnuts, cookies, crackers, muffins, biscuits, stick margarine and pie crust. You can determine the amount of trans-fat in packaged foods by looking at the Nutrition Facts label. But, keep in mind that products can be listed as "O grams of trans-fat" if they have between zero and half a gram of trans-fat per serving. Another way you can spot trans-fat in foods is by reading the ingredients list and looking for "partially hydrogenated oils." That means trans-fat.

Each serving from this list contains 0 grams carbohydrates, 0 grams protein, 5 grams fat and 45 calories.

### **GREEN FATS (MONOUNSATURATED):**

FOOD	ONE SERVING
Avocado, medium (1 oz)	2 tbsp
Nut butters (trans-fat free)	11⁄2 tsp
Nuts: almonds, cashews macadamia peanuts pecans	6 nuts 3 nuts 10 nuts 4 halves
Oil: canola, olive, peanut	1 tsp
Olives, black (ripe)	8 large
Olives, green (stuffed)	10 large



### **GREEN FATS (POLYUNSATURATED):**

FOOD	ONE SERVING
Margarine (containing mono or poly unsaturated oil)	1 tbsp
Mayonnaise: reduced-fat regular	1 tbsp 1 tsp
Oil: corn, cottonseed, flaxseed, grape seed, safflower, soybean, sunflower	1 tsp
Salad dressing; reduced-fat regular	2 tbsp 1 tbsp

### YELLOW FATS (SATURATED)

Saturated fat should be less than 10% of your calories for the day, and you should eat no more than 20g per day. Foods that have less than 1g saturated fat per serving are considered low in saturated fat.

FOOD	ONE SERVING
Bacon, cooked, regular or turkey	1 slice
Butter, stick	1 tsp
Cream, half and half	2 tbsp
Cream cheese: reduced-fat regular	1½ tbsp 1 tbsp
Sour cream: reduced-fat or light regular	3 tbsp 2 tbsp



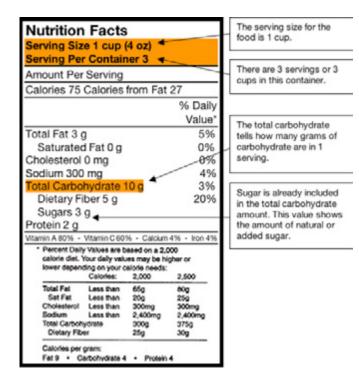
## **Read the Labels**

When you plan meals based on how many carbohydrates you want to eat, count only the foods in your meals that contain carbohydrates. This guide gives you information to see about how many carbohydrates are in different types of foods.

If you are using a packaged food with a "Nutrition Facts" label, look at the number of "Total Carbohydrate" grams listed on the label. This tells you how many grams of carbohydrates are in one serving of that food.

Be careful when reading the label. There can be more than one serving size in the package, so if you eat more than one serving, you will need to figure out how many carbohydrates you are eating for your portion.

Also check the ingredient list on a food label. Limit foods that have any form of sugar or starch listed in the first five ingredients. Be aware that there are lots of different names for sugar, which you need to watch for. All of these are forms of sugar: sucrose, dextrose, fructose, maltose, lactose, glucose, honey, syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, maple syrup, brown rice syrup, molasses, evaporated cane juice, cane juice, fruit juice concentrate, corn sweeteners, galactose, agave nectar, beet sugar, brown sugar, cane juice crystals, cane sugar, caramel, carob syrup, corn syrup solids, crystalline fructose, diastatic malt, ethyl maltol, maltodextrin, panela, panocha, confectioners sugar, treacle, turbinado sugar, sorbitol, mannitol.



# **Healthy Plate = Balanced Plate**

You don't have to stop eating all the foods you like or completely change your diet to be healthy. It's better, and lasts longer, if you get in the habit of making mindful food choices and eating different types of foods to get the best mix of nutrients.

One way to think about this is how much of what kinds of food go on your plate for each meal. The guide and picture below show you what a well-balanced meal should look like:

## NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES: 1/2 of your plate.

Good choices include broccoli, mushrooms, yellow squash, asparagus, cauliflower and green beans.

### $\mathsf{PROTEIN}$ : 14 of your plate.

Healthy protein choices include lean meat, chicken, turkey and fish. Tofu and nuts can also be a good source of protein. Keep in mind that some sauces you might eat on your protein choices (like barbecue, teriyaki or other glazes) may be high in sugar.

## STARCHES AND GRAINS: 1/4 of your plate.

This group is high in carbohydrates. Choose whole-grain versions when you can, and aim for natural rather than processed food.



## PLATE METHOD FOR HEALTHY MEAL PLANNING

OR

## NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES

Artichokes • Asparagus Green Beans • Beets • Broccoli Brussels Sprouts • Cabbage Carrots • Cauliflower • Cucumber Eggplant • Greens • Leeks Lettuce • Mushrooms Okra • Onions • Peppers Spinach • Summer Squash Tomato

## PROTEIN

Lean Meat • Poultry • Fish Tofu • Eggs • Nuts • Seeds Low-Fat Cheese • Soy Meat Substitutes

## STARCH

Bread • Tortilla • Bun • Bagel Rice • Pasta • Cereal • Grains Potatoes • Corn • Yams • Peas Winter Squash • Beans

**MILK** 1 portion milk or

yogurt, if desired

FRUIT

1 portion, if desired



# Resources

As part of our team of clinical professionals, Blue Cross has registered dietitians who can work with you in achieving your health and wellness goals.

Blue Cross dietitians offer health coaching on:

- Diet/nutrition advice to manage conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure or kidney disease
- Proper exercise
- Meal planning
- How many and what type of fluids to drink
- How to eat out successfully
- Reading and understanding food labels
- Portion control
- Body Mass Index (BMI) and weight loss

Dietitians do health coaching by phone and can send you educational materials by mail or email.

#### Can I get dietitian health coaching?

Our dietitians offer health coaching if you:

- Have a blood sugar (A1C) level above 8%
- Have a BMI above 40
- Are in Chronic Kidney Disease Stage 3 or 4
- Have high blood pressure (systolic BP above 150 and diastolic BP above 90) and have a BMI of 35 or higher

If you have questions about your numbers, talk to your doctor. Your doctor can also refer you to speak with one of our dietitians.

If you are a Blue Cross member, you do not need to pay anything extra for this service.

# How do I reach the dietitians?

Call 1-800-317-2299, Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. (closed on office holidays).

To learn more about our dietitians and other clinical staff, visit www.bcbsla.com/BoB.