

## Why Count Carbohydrates?

Susan J. Smith, PhD, CDE  
Visalia Medical Clinic

Carbohydrate foods break down 100% into sugar. If too many are eaten at one time, it will produce more sugar in the blood stream and the after-meal blood sugar will be too high.

Carbohydrates can also leave us hungry sooner, because they are broken down completely into sugar.

Which foods are carbohydrates?

1. Breads & cereals, rice and pasta
2. Starchy vegetables (corn, peas, potatoes, sweet potatoes)
3. Snack foods (chips, popcorn, pretzels)
4. Beans, peas & lentils
5. Fruits, and
6. Milk and low-fat yogurt (milk contains maltose, natural milk sugar)

A typical meal should contain 2-3 servings of carbs at each meal. A serving or portion is ½ cup generally. Each serving contains 15 grams of carbohydrates. Thus a meal should contain 30-45 grams of carbohydrates. The pancreas can usually handle this amount of carbohydrates by producing appropriate amount of insulin to match the food intake. It is also most accurate to check the food label to determine how many carbohydrates are in the food.

The more processed the carbohydrates are, the faster they will be broken down into sugar. Thus, blended foods will go into the blood stream quickly.

Carbohydrates are not bad foods. They provide vitamins and minerals and fiber in our diet and provide energy. Do not eliminate carbohydrates but we do need to limit them at each meal.

The body doesn't care which carbohydrates are eaten as long as the portion is not excessive.

Use your blood glucose meter to check a 2 hour after-meal blood sugar to determine if the meal was appropriate in terms of the grams of carbohydrates

All restaurants who have more than 10 restaurants in their chain are required by FDA to have available the nutrition facts on all their foods.

Check the carbohydrate content of these foods:

Your favorite Starbucks drinks, Jamba juice, chicken teriyaki bowl, your favorite Taco Bell entrée, McDonalds French fries, pot pie. You may be surprised at the amounts of carbohydrates in what you are currently eating.

Eat too many carbohydrates at a meal? Go for a 20 minute walk to bring the blood sugar down faster. Join us at Visalia Medical Center on Saturday, April 30 morning for our annual Diabetes Walk in memory of Dr. James Mohs.

Susan Smith, Ph.D., CDE, is a nationally Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE) and a specialist in the field of diabetes since 1988. Since 2002 she has worked with patients individually through all of the internal medicine and family practice providers at Visalia Medical Clinic.

ssmith@vmchealth.com

5400 WEST HILLSDALE DRIVE ~ VISALIA, CA 93291-5140

