

Carbohydrate (Carb) Gram Counting at the Hospital

Carbohydrate (carb) gram counting is a way to plan your meals to help control your blood sugar. The total grams you eat at a meal will determine the dose of insulin you receive.

Carb gram counting is done here to keep your blood sugars in goal range. You do not have to do carb gram counting at home. If you would like to do it at home, please tell your nurse.

Foods That Have Carb

- Grain products such as breads, rice, pasta, cereals
- Legumes such as kidney beans, split peas, lentils
- Starchy veggies such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, green peas, and winter squash
- Fruit and fruit juices
- Milk and yogurt
- Items that use refined sugar such as regular soda, corn syrup, jelly, candies, sweets, and desserts

Carb Intake

Your daily need for carbs is based on your gender, height, weight, and how active you are. The number of grams you need in a day may differ from someone else with diabetes. The American Diabetes Association suggests eating at least 130 grams of carbs per day.

The diabetes meal plan at UW Health includes 45-60 grams of carbs at each meal for women and 60-75 grams for men.

Carbs Effect Blood Sugar Levels

- Carbs, when compared to protein and fat, has the greatest effect on blood sugar levels.
- 90-100% of carbs enter the blood stream as sugar 20-90 minutes after eating.
- 1 gram of carbs raises blood sugar levels 3-4 mg/dL.

Step 1

To begin, you must know how much insulin you need to cover the amount of carbs you eat. This is called the insulin-to-carbohydrate ratio (ICR). Your health care team will decide which ratio is best for you.

Your ICR: 1 unit insulin for every _____ grams of carb.

Step 2

Order your meal. To help you figure out how many carbs are in your meals, use the carb counting guide that will be given to you. Your nurse, dietitian and food service staff can help you as needed. Your meal tray will arrive with a tray ticket that shows the total carbs for the meal you ordered. The meal ticket on the next page is a sample of what you will see on your meal tray.

Hot Prep:	
1 Grilled Chix Sandwich Each	(Carb 36 gm)
Cold Prep:	
1 Lettuce Leaf for Hot Sandwich	
1 Sliced Tomato for Hot Sandwich	(Carb 1 gm)
Expeditor:	
1 FF Mayonnaise 1 pkt	(Carb 2 gm)
1 Mustard Each	
1 Ranch FF Dressing Each	(Carb 4 gm)
1 Creamer Each	
1 Splenda Each	(Carb 1 gm)
1 Tossed Salad Each	(Carb 4 gm)
1 Apple Each	(Carb 28 gm)
1 Reg Coffee 6 ozl	
Message:	
Service Instructions:	
	Current Meal: (Carb 76 gm)
Diet Order: DMM	
Allergy:	
Delivery Time:	Clerk: yhz
Print Date/Time: 7/2/2015 10:23	

Grams will be listed for each food item on your meal tray.

Total grams for the meal are also listed.

Step 3

Call your nurse after you finish eating. We will count and total the grams of carb you ate. We will use your ICR to figure out the amount of insulin you need for that meal. Your nurse will then give you your insulin.

If you have any questions, let your nurse know. Also, let your nurse know if you would like to do carb counting at home.

Teach Back

What is the most important thing you learned from this handout?

What changes will you make in your diet/lifestyle, based on what you learned today?

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#527