

Carbohydrate (Carb) Gram Counting at the Hospital

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

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 height, weight, and how active you are. The number of grams you need in a day may differ from someone else with diabetes.

The diabetes meal plan at UW Health includes 45-60 grams of carbs at each meal for women and 60-75 grams for men. A plan will be made with your needs in mind.

Carbs Effect Blood Sugar Levels

- Carbs, when compared to protein and fat, have the greatest effect on blood sugar levels.
- 90-100% of carbs enter the blood stream as sugar 20-90 minutes after eating.

Your Insulin to Carbohydrate Ratio

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

Your ICR: 1 unit of (lispro) insulin for every _____ grams of carbohydrate

Ordering Your Meal

Order your meal. A carb counting guide is available to help you know how many carbs are in your meals. Your nurse, dietitian and food service staff can help you as needed. Your meal tray will arrive with a ticket that shows the total carbs for the meal you ordered. The ticket on the next page is a sample.

Getting Your Insulin

Call your nurse after you finish eating. We will count the total grams of carbs you eat. and 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.

Hot Prep:	
1 Grilled Chix Sandwich Each	(Carb 36 g)
Cold Prep:	
1 Lettuce Leaf for Hot Sandwich	
1 Sliced Tomato for Hot Sandwich	(Carb 1 g)
Expeditor:	
1 FF Mayonnaise 1 pkt	(Carb 2 g)
1 Mustard Each	
1 Ranch FF Dressing Each	(Carb 4 g)
1 Creamer Each	
1 Splenda Each	(Carb 1 g)
1 Tossed Salad Each	(Carb 4 g)
1 Apple Each	(Carb 28 g)
1 Reg Coffee 6 ozl	
Message:	
Service Instructions:	
Current Meal (Carb 76 g) Fluid 180 ml, Net Carb 67g) Diet Order: RS-1, DMM	
Delivery Time:	Clerk: yhz Print Date/Time: 7/2/2022 10:23

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

Total carb grams for this meal (circled) is listed first on this line.

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 © 7/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#527