Which foods have carbs?

Make smart food choices when counting carbohydrates to control blood sugar (blood glucose).

The first step in counting carbs is figuring out which foods contain them. But that can be tricky. "Some people don't realize that milk has carbohydrate in it. They think it's a protein food," says Alison Evert, MS, RD, CDE, dietitian, diabetes educator and coordinator of diabetes education programs at the University of Washington Medical Center. Often people don't realize that fruit contains carbohydrate or that a whole-grain food such as brown rice isn't a "free" food. It still contains carbohydrate. Carbohydrates come in many food forms. So how do you know what to look for?

Examples of foods with the most carbs in each food group:

Dairy: milk, yogurt and ice cream

Fruit: whole fruit and fruit juice

Grains: bread, rice, crackers and cereal

Legumes: beans and other plant-based proteins

Starchy vegetables: potatoes and corn

Sugary sweets: soda, candy, cookies and other desserts (limit these!)

Remember, carbohydrates aren't all bad—your body needs the glucose for energy. But it's important to stick to nutrient-rich food sources, pay attention to portion sizes and keep the amount of carbs in your snacks and meals consistent.

One basic way to count carbs is based on choices or units of 15 grams. It may help to picture what 15 grams of carb looks like in food.

Examples of foods that contain 15 grams of carbs:

- 1 small piece of fruit
- 1 slice of bread
- 1/2 cup cooked oatmeal
- 1/3 cup cooked pasta or rice
- 4 to 6 crackers
- 1/2 cup black beans or other starchy vegetable
- 1/4 large baked potato
- 2/3 cup nonfat yogurt

- 2 small cookies
- 1/2 cup ice cream or sherbet
- 6 chicken nuggets
- 1/2 cup of casserole
- 1/4 medium serving of French fries

Reading food labels can help you find out how many carbs are in the foods you eat. If a product doesn't have a nutrition label, such as a whole piece of fruit or a prepared food, there are apps and other tools available to help you.

Learn more about counting carbs.