

# Diabetes: Counting Carbohydrates

If you have diabetes, you're sure to hear a lot about carbohydrate counting— or carb counting.

Your doctor and your diabetes educator or dietitian probably covered this when you were diagnosed.

But just in case you're still figuring out what it all means, let's start with the basics: What are carbohydrates, and how do they affect your body when you have diabetes?

Here's what's going on inside your body: When you eat something that has carbs in it, your body turns that into a type of sugar called glucose.

Insulin acts as a key to let glucose leave the blood and move into other cells throughout the body, where it's used for energy.

But with diabetes, your body doesn't make insulin, or it doesn't make enough insulin.

Or your body has trouble using the insulin it does make.

Without the help of insulin, the glucose stays in the blood.

And when this happens, it's called high blood sugar.

Your body needs help moving that sugar out of your blood.

Of all the foods you eat, foods that have carbs cause your blood sugar to rise the most.

And that makes more work for you and your body to lower your blood sugar.

That's why your doctor and diabetes educator will work with you to find out how many carbs are right for you.

Now, when it comes to actually counting carbs, your first step will be to talk to your diabetes educator or dietitian to help you make a plan.

And if you're taking insulin, they'll talk to you about something called your insulin-to-carb ratio.

Once you know how many carbs are right for you, you can start counting.

You can find the number of carbs in packaged foods by reading food labels.

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And your diabetes educator will help you learn how many carbs are in fresh foods.

Like most new things, carb counting may seem hard at first, but it's going to be okay.

You can do this.

And remember, if you need a little help or support, a diabetes educator can help.