



PATIENT INFORMATION

MANAGING GESTATIONAL DIABETES

What is Gestational Diabetes?

Gestational diabetes (GDM) is a type of diabetes that occurs during pregnancy. It happens when your body does not effectively regulate blood sugar levels, causing higher-than-normal blood glucose levels. This condition is typically diagnosed in the second or third trimester and often goes away after childbirth. This guide provides a balanced approach to managing gestational diabetes through diet and exercise. Keeping track of your carbohydrate intake and staying active can help maintain your blood sugar levels within the target range, supporting a healthy pregnancy.

Why is Managing Carbohydrates Important?

Carbohydrates (carbs) are found in many foods and directly affect blood sugar levels. When managing gestational diabetes, you need to control the amount of carbs you eat to help keep your blood sugar levels in a healthy range.

"Carb counting," is a meal planning method to help manage your blood sugars. Tracking how many grams of carbohydrates you eat and setting a daily limit can help maintain your blood sugars. Your activity level and any medications that you may be taking will affect the right amount of carbohydrates for you.

General Guidelines for Carbohydrate Intake

- **Carb intake per meal:** 30-45 grams per meal.
- **Carb intake per snack:** 15-20 grams per snack.
- Avoid skipping meals, and aim for 3 small meals and 2-3 snacks throughout the day.

Meal/Snack	Recommended Carb Range
Breakfast	30 grams
Morning Snack	15 grams
Lunch	30 grams
Afternoon Snack	15 grams
Dinner	30-45 grams
Bedtime Snack	15-20 grams

Food Choices and Carb Content

Foods that contain carbohydrate are:

- bread, cereal, rice, and crackers
- fruit and juice
- milk and yogurt
- dried beans like pinto beans and soy products
- starchy vegetables like potatoes and corn
- sweets and snack foods like sodas, juice drinks, cake, cookies, candy, and chips
- non-starchy vegetables have a little bit of carbohydrate but in general are very low in sugar.



Interpreting Nutrition Labels

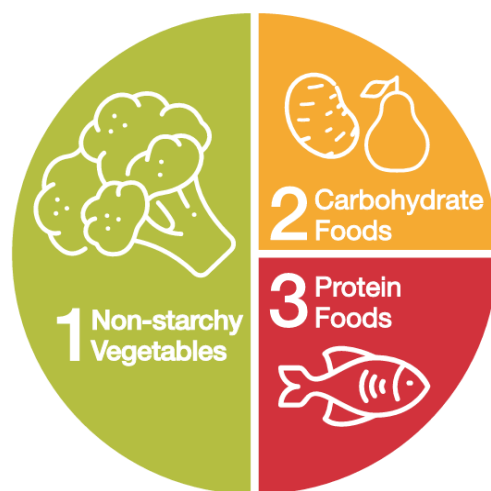
Carbohydrates

Total carbohydrate on the label includes all three types of carbohydrate: sugar, starch and fiber. It's important to use the total grams when counting carbs or choosing which foods to include.

Nutrition Facts	
Approx. 14 servings per container	
Serving size 1 slice (48g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	100
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 115mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate 21g	7%
Dietary Fiber 4g	15%
Total Sugar 1g	
Includes 1g Added Sugars	2%
Protein 4g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 25mg	0%
Iron .7mg	4%
Potassium 60mg	0%

Carbohydrate counting is easier when food labels are available. You can look at how much carbohydrate is in the foods you want to eat and decide how much of the food you can eat.

- Look at the **serving size**. All the information on the label is about this amount of food. If you will be eating a larger serving, then you will need to double or triple the information on the label.
- Look at the **grams of total carbohydrate**. Total carbohydrate on the label includes sugar, starch, and fiber.
- Knowing the goal amount of carb you can eat, figure out the portion size to match.



For example, there is about *15 grams of carbohydrate* in:

- 1 small piece of fresh fruit (4 oz)
- 1/2 cup of canned or frozen fruit
- 1 slice of bread (1 oz) or 1 (6 inch) tortilla
- 1/2 cup of oatmeal
- 1/3 cup of pasta or rice
- 4-6 crackers
- 1/2 English muffin or hamburger bun
- 1/2 cup of black beans or starchy vegetable
- 1/4 of a large baked potato (3 oz)
- 2/3 cup of plain fat-free yogurt
- 2 small cookies
- 2 inch square brownie or cake without frosting
- 1/2 cup ice cream or sherbet
- 1 tbsp syrup, jam, jelly, sugar or honey
- 2 tbsp light syrup
- 6 chicken nuggets
- 1/2 cup of casserole
- 1 cup of soup
- 1/4 serving of a medium french fry

Protein and Fat

Always include a source of protein and fat to balance out your meal.

Breakfast: Carbohydrate Portions

Food	Portion Size	Carb Content (grams)
Whole grain bread	1 slice	15 grams
Oatmeal	1/2 cup cooked	15 grams
Greek yogurt (plain, unsweetened)	6 oz	10 grams
Berries (e.g., strawberries)	1/2 cup	7 grams
Scrambled eggs	2 eggs	0 grams

Lunch: Carbohydrate Portions

Food	Portion Size	Carb Content (grams)
Brown rice	1/3 cup cooked	15 grams
Chicken breast (grilled)	3 oz	0 grams
Mixed salad with dressing	1 cup	5 grams
Apple	1 small	15 grams
Hummus	2 tbsp	4 grams

Dinner: Carbohydrate Portions

Food	Portion Size	Carb Content (grams)
Whole wheat pasta	1/2 cup cooked	22 grams
Salmon (baked or grilled)	4 oz	0 grams
Steamed broccoli	1 cup	6 grams
Sweet potato (baked)	1/2 small	15 grams
Mixed green salad with olive oil	1 cup	5 grams

Snacks:

Food	Portion Size	Carb Content (grams)
Cheese stick	1	0 grams
Almonds	1 oz (about 23)	5 grams
Baby carrots	1/2 cup	6 grams
Whole grain crackers	6 small	15 grams
Cottage cheese (low-fat)	1/2 cup	4 grams

Exercise Recommendations for Gestational Diabetes

Regular exercise helps lower blood sugar levels and improves your body's sensitivity to insulin. Aim for at least **30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week**. Even a 5-10 minute walk after a meal can help bring down glucose readings. Here are some safe exercises for pregnancy:

- **Walking:** A simple and effective way to stay active.
- **Swimming:** Low impact and great for joint relief.
- **Prenatal yoga:** Helps with flexibility, balance, and relaxation.
- **Stationary bike:** A safe cardiovascular workout.

Additional Information:

- **Monitor blood sugar levels regularly:** glucose levels should be checked 4 times a day
 - Fasting (after at least an 8 hour fast)
 - 1 or 2 hours post starting to eat your meal
- **Signs/symptoms of low glucose (hypoglycemia) include:**
 - Glucose less than 60-70 mg/dL, and
 - Shakiness or trembling
 - Sweating
 - Dizziness or lightheadedness
 - Fast heartbeat
 - Irritability or mood changes
 - Headache
 - In severe cases of hypoglycemia, symptoms may include
 - Confusion or trouble concentrating
 - Blurred vision
 - Weakness or tiredness
 - Seizures (in extreme cases)
 - Loss of consciousness
 - If you're having symptoms of hypoglycemia, please:
 - **check your glucose via fingerstick**
 - **If your blood sugar is below 60-70 mg/dL**, you should eat or drink **15 grams of fast-acting carbs** (such as fruit juice, or regular soda).
 - Wait 15 minutes and check your blood sugar again.
 - If your blood sugar is still low, repeat the process until glucose is above 70 mg/dL.
 - Once your blood sugar is back to normal, eat a small meal or snack to stabilize your levels, such as a slice of whole-grain bread with peanut butter or cheese.
- **If utilizing continuous glucose monitor (CGM):**
 - Make sure to record your glucose readings at appropriate time intervals
 - If your glucose value is too low or too high, your sensor may not be working correctly and you should check a fingerstick to confirm any outlier readings
- **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day.

Blood Glucose Target Range:

- Fasting <95mg/dL
- One-hour after a meal <140mg/dL, or
- Two-hours after a meal <120mg/dL



People with GDM in pregnancy should be screened **4 to 12 weeks** after delivery for prediabetes or type 2 diabetes.



People with a history of GDM should have lifelong screening for prediabetes or type 2 diabetes **every 1 to 3 years**.

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Examples of Carbs in Common Foods

Bread, Cereal, Grain, Pasta, and Rice		One serving = 15 g carbs
Bagel (1/3 large bagel or 1 oz) Biscuit (2 1/2 inches across) Bread, white or whole wheat, pumpernickel, rye (1 slice or 1 oz) Bun, hamburger/hot dog (1/2 bun or 1 oz) Crackers, saltine or round butter (4 to 6) English muffin (1/2) Melba toast (4 slices) Oyster crackers (20) Pancake or waffle (4 inches across) Stuffing (1/3 cup) Tortilla, corn or flour (6 inches across)	Cereals: Bran cereal, flakes (1/2 cup) Cold cereal, unsweetened (3/4 cup) Cold cereal, sugar-coated (1/2 cup) Cooked cereal, oatmeal, grits (1/2 cup) Granola (1/4 cup) Puffed cereal (1 1/2 cups)	
		Grains (cooked): Barley (1/3 cup) Couscous (1/3 cup) Pasta (1/3 cup) Rice, white or brown (1/3 cup)

Starchy Vegetables		One serving = 15 g carbs
Breadfruit (1/4 cup small cubes) Corn/peas (1/2 cup) Corn on the cob, large (1/2 cob) Mixed vegetables with corn, peas, or pasta (1 cup) Potato, baked (1 small or 1/4 large, 3 oz)	Potatoes, mashed (1/2 cup) Pumpkin, cooked (1 cup small cubes) Squash, acorn, butternut (1 cup) Sweet potato (1/2 cup) Yam (1/2 cup)	

Dried Beans, Peas, and Lentils		One serving = 15 g carbs
Baked beans (1/3 cup) Beans—black, garbanzo, kidney, navy, lima, pinto, white (cooked 1/2 cup) Lentils (cooked 1/2 cup)	Hummus (1/3 cup) Refried beans (1/2 cup) Peas—black-eyed, split, cooked (1/2 cup)	

Nonstarchy Vegetables		One serving = 5 g carbs
In general, 1 serving = 1 cup raw, 1/2 cup cooked, 1/2 cup juice, or 1/2 cup tomato sauce.		
Beans (wax or green); bean sprouts; beets; broccoli; brussels sprouts; cabbage; carrots; cauliflower; celery; cucumber; eggplant; greens; lettuce; mushrooms; okra; onions; pea pods; peppers; radishes; rutabaga; spinach; tomatoes; zucchini.		

Sweets	
One serving = 15 g carbs Brownie, unfrosted (1¼-inch square—1 oz) Cake, unfrosted (2-inch square—1 oz) Cookies (2 small, sandwich type) Fruit juice bars (1 bar—3 oz) Ice cream (½ cup) Jam/jelly (1 tbsp) Muffin (¼ of 4-oz muffin) Pancake syrup (1 tbsp) Regular gelatin (½ cup) Regular soda (½ cup) Sports drinks (1 cup) Yogurt, frozen (½ cup)	One serving = 30 g carbs Cupcake, small, frosted (1¾) Doughnut, glazed (2-3 oz) Milk, chocolate (1 cup) Pie, pumpkin (⅓ pie) Pudding (½ cup) Rice pudding, sweet rice with milk (½ cup) Sherbet (½ cup) <i>Please note that this has more carbs:</i> Pie, fruit, 2 crusts (⅓ pie is 45 g of carbs)

Snack Foods	One serving = 15 g carbs
Animal crackers (8 crackers) Gingersnaps (3 cookies) Graham crackers (3 squares) Rice cakes (2 cakes)	Popped popcorn (3 cups) Pretzels (¾ oz) Snack chips (15-20 chips) Vanilla wafers (5 wafers)

Milk	One serving = 12-15 g carbs
Fat-free or low-fat milk, soy or cow's (1 cup) Fat-free plain yogurt (⅔ cup)	Fat-free, artificially sweetened flavored yogurt (⅔ cup)

Fruit	One serving = 15 g carbs
Apple or orange (1 small) Apricots (4 whole or 8 dried halves) Banana, extra small (1 or 4 oz) Blueberries (¾ cup) Canned fruit in juice (½ cup) Cantaloupe (1 cup cubes) Cherries (12) Dried fruit (2 tbsp) Grapefruit, large (½) Grapes, small (17) Juice, prune or grape, fruit juice blends, 100% juice (⅓ cup) Juice, unsweetened (½ cup)	Kiwi (1) Mango (½ small or ½ cup) Papaya (½ of small fruit or 1 cup cubes) Passion fruit (¼ cup) Peach (1 medium) Pear (½ large) Pineapple (¾ cup) Plum (2 small) or 3 dried plums Raspberries (1 cup) Strawberries (1¼ cup) Watermelon (1¼ cup)

Foods That Don't Have Carbs

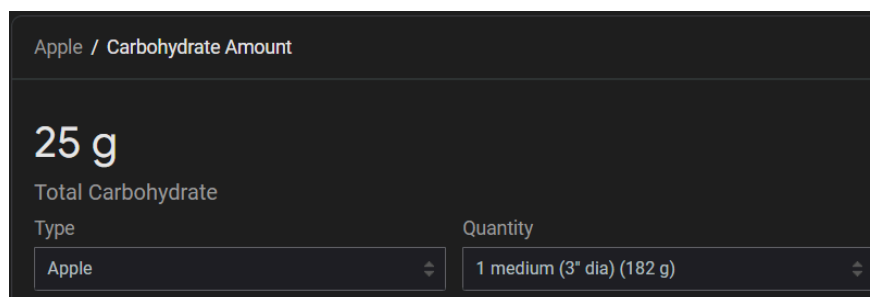
Meat/chicken/poultry/fish do not have carbs, but if they are prepared with sauces or breaded, they may contain carbs. Check the Nutrition Facts on the package. Plan to eat 4 to 6 ounces of lean meat/meat substitutes per day. Also, fats (such as oils) do not contain carbs, but eating too much fat may add extra calories to your meal plan.

Combination Foods

How can you figure out how many carbs are in mixed foods such as salads, soups, and casseroles?

Search online or use a database such as MyFitnessPal (app)

Below are some examples to help you know what you are getting.



MyFitnessPal 4+
Calorie Counter & Diet Tracker
[Under Armour, Inc.](#)
#3 in Health & Fitness
★★★★★ 4.7 • 1.2M Ratings
Free · Offers In-App Purchases

Food	Serving Size	Carbs
Baked empanada	1 empanada	36 g
Burrito (beef and bean)	5 oz	45 g
Casseroles	1 cup	30 g
Chili (beef and bean)	1 cup	30 g
Frozen enchilada dinner	1 11-oz dinner	63 g
Hamburger	1 2-oz bun	30 g
Lasagna (meat)	1 cup	30 g
Macaroni & cheese	1 cup	30 g
Orange chicken (meat w/ sweet sauce)	1 cup	45 g
Pita pocket sandwich	1 4½-oz sandwich	45 g
Pizza (thin crust, cheese)	¼ of a 12-inch pizza	30 g
Pot pie	1 7-oz pie	38 g
Soup	1 cup	15 g
Spaghetti with meatballs	1 cup	30 g
Stew	1 cup	15 g
Submarine sandwich	1 6-inch sub	45 g
Taco (meat and cheese)	1 taco	15 g

When Eating Out

When eating out, choose meals that are within your meal plan. Most fast food restaurants provide nutrition facts brochures or offer information on their websites that you can use to look up the amount of carbs in meals. Practice measuring foods at home to learn how to estimate portion sizes in a restaurant.

Browse the menu for dishes cooked by these healthier methods:

- Steamed
- Grilled
- Roasted
- Broiled
- Baked
- Poached
- Red sauces (instead of white ones)
- Lightly sautéed

Ask for what YOU want:

- Nutrition information
- Description about how the food is cooked
- Salad dressing on the side in order to use less than the whole serving
- Smaller or half portions
- Less sauce in general
- Extra veggies on the side
- Skip appetizers, bread, and butter