



Patient & Family Guide
2025

Counting Carbohydrates and the Glycemic Index



www.nshealth.ca

Counting Carbohydrates and the Glycemic Index

- **Carbohydrates** (also called **carbs**) are made of sugars, starches, and fibre.
 - › Sugars can enter the blood right away. They are digested (broken down) quickly and raise blood sugar fast.
 - › Starches are long chains of sugars linked together. They are digested more slowly and raise your blood sugar slower than sugar.
 - › Fibre is not digested, so it does not count towards your net carbohydrates (see page 2).
- Having more fibre and less sugars will help lower your blood sugar by raising it more slowly.
- Protein helps to keep your blood sugar level stable by slowing digestion.
 - › A balanced snack should have between 0 and 30 grams of carbs and some protein (5% or more of the Percent Daily Value).

What is the glycemic index?

- The glycemic index (GI) is a scale from 1 to 100 that rates:
 - › How high a food will raise your blood sugar level
 - › How fast a food will raise your blood sugar level
- There are 3 GI categories:
 - › Low GI (55 or less)
 - › Medium GI (between 56 and 59)
 - › High GI (70 or more)
- Try to choose foods with a **lower GI** as often as you can.

How to count carbs

You can use a food's nutrition label to count its **net carbohydrates**. Net carbohydrates are the amount of carbs in a food that you can digest.

1. Look at the nutrition label. Find the **carbohydrate** amount.

Nutrition Facts	
1 servings per container	
Serving size	50 nuts (100g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	290
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 24g	31%
Saturated Fat 2g	10%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 105mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate 15g	5%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 10g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 9g	18%
Not a significant source of vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium	
*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

1. Carbs →
2. Fibre →

2. Find the **fibre** amount.
3. Find the amount of **net carbohydrates** the food has.
 - › To get the amount of net carbohydrates, subtract the amount of fibre from the amount of carbohydrates:

A food with 15 grams of carbohydrates and 4 grams of fibre has **11 grams of net carbohydrates** ($15\text{ g} - 4\text{ g} = 11\text{ g}$).

- **Always compare the serving size on the label with how much you plan to have.**
- **Try counting carbs with the granola bars on pages 5 to 8 to see which ones have the lowest net carbohydrates.**

Granola Bars

	Nature Valley™ Protein Peanut Butter Dark Chocolate	Nature Valley™ Crunchy Apple Crisp	Made Good® Strawberry	Made with Local™ Lemon Square
Total carbs	14 grams	29 grams	25 grams	28 grams
Sugars	6 grams	10 grams	7 grams	12 grams
Fibre	5 grams	3 grams	2 grams	3 grams
Protein	9 grams	3 grams	3 grams	6 grams
Net carbs (Total carbs - fibre)	14 g - 5 g =			

Granola Bars

	Quaker® Dips® Rainbow Chip	Quaker™ Chewy Harvest Yogurt	Special K® Nuts & Grain – Cranberries & Almonds	Special K® Nuts & Grain – Dark Chocolate Chunks & Almond
Total carbs	23 grams	25 grams	19 grams	16 grams
Sugars	10 grams	11 grams	9 grams	7 grams
Fibre	1 gram	1 to 2 grams	3 grams	3 grams
Protein	2 grams	2 grams	3 grams	4 grams
Net carbs (Total carbs - fibre)	23 g – 1 g =			

Granola Bars

	Nutri-grain® Strawberry Cereal	Kashi® Apple Cinnamon Flax Crunchy 7 Grain with Quinoa	Go Pure™ Roasted Banana	PC® Blue Menu Berry Blend Chewy Bars
Total carbs	26 grams	26 grams	19 grams	20 grams
Sugars	14 grams	8 grams	9 grams	3 grams
Fibre	2 grams	3 grams	2 grams	6 grams
Protein	2 grams	3 grams	2 grams	2 grams
Net carbs (Total carbs - fibre)	26 g - 2 g =			

Granola Bars

	Compliments Chewy Chocolate Chip	Kind® Dark Chocolate Chunk
Total carbs	20 grams	23 grams
Sugars	8 grams	8 grams
Fibre	1 grams	2 grams
Protein	2 grams	2 grams
Net carbs (Total carbs - fibre)	20 g - 1 g =	

Note: We do not endorse or suggest these products. They are listed here for information and education purposes only.

This table compares the GI, carbs, fibre, and protein amounts of 3 cereals.

	All-Bran	Cream of Wheat (Regular)	Rice Krispies®
GI	51 (low)	67 (medium)	83 (high)
Carbs	56 grams	31 grams	25 grams
Fibre	22 grams	1 gram	3 grams
Net carbs	34 grams	30 grams	22 grams
Protein	9 grams	4 grams	2 grams

Resources

Understanding the glycemic index (GI) – Diabetes Canada

- › [www.diabetes.ca/resources/tools-resources/understanding-the-glycemic-index-\(gi\)](http://www.diabetes.ca/resources/tools-resources/understanding-the-glycemic-index-(gi))



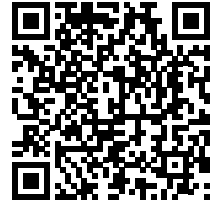
Carb counting for blood sugar control – Diabetes Canada

- › www.diabetes.ca/nutrition-fitness/healthy-eating/carb-counting



LMC Guide to Smart Snacking – LMC Healthcare

- › www.lmc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Smart-Snacking-July-2021.pdf



Diabetes Centres

- Find a Diabetes Centre in Nova Scotia:
 - › www.nshealth.ca/diabetes

Diabetes Care and Education subject guide

- This guide has general information about diabetes and local Nova Scotia resources:
 - › <https://library.nshealth.ca/DiabetesNS>

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Nutrition and Food Services
Designed and Managed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

LC85-2513 © August 2025 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed August 2028 or sooner, if needed.
Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>