

# Counting Carbohydrates and the Glycemic Index

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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](https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

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

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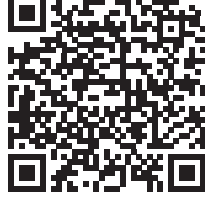
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Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>

# 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).

LMC Guide to Smart Snacking – LMC Healthcare

- › [www.lmc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Smart-Snacking-July-2021.pdf](http://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](http://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.**

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        |

**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.

**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](http://www.diabetes.ca/nutrition-fitness/healthy-eating/carb-counting)



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% |
| Trans 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

Granola Bars

|                                  |             |          |          |         |         |         |         |                                 |  |
|----------------------------------|-------------|----------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|--|
| Compliments Chewy Chocolate Chip | Total carbs | 20 grams | 23 grams | 8 grams | 1 grams | 2 grams | 2 grams | Net carbs (Total carbs - fibre) |  |
| Kind® Dark Chocolate Chunk       |             |          |          |         |         |         |         | $20\text{ g} - 1\text{ g} =$    |  |

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

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- 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

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

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## Granola Bars

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

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