

Dietitians New Zealand | Ngā Pūkenga Kai Ora o Aotearoa

EMPOWERING KIWIS  
TO EAT WELL

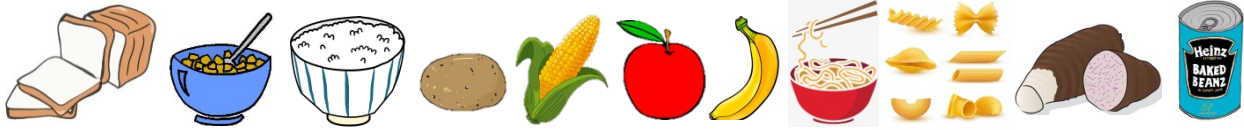
INFORMATION *for people*  
and *whānau* with DIABETES

**BASIC GENERAL**  
**CARBOHYDRATES**

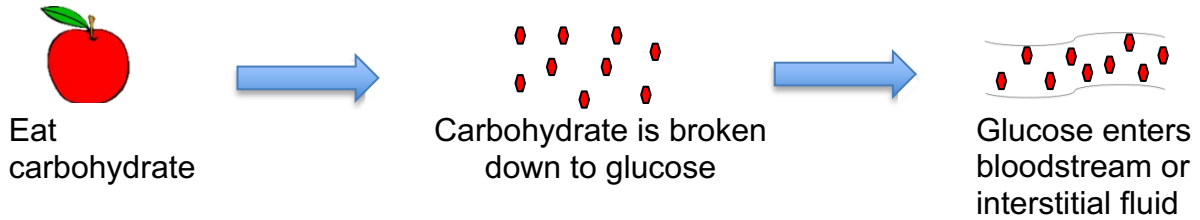
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# Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are found in many foods which we commonly eat, such as breads, cereals, grains, legumes, vegetables, fruit and sugary foods.



When you eat carbohydrates, they are broken down into glucose (sugar) in the gut. This glucose then enters the body through your blood and interstitial fluid. This is how you can measure your **glucose levels**.



Carbohydrate is your body's main source of energy.

Eating too much carbohydrate will increase your glucose above recommended levels.

Managing your carbohydrate foods is an important part of managing your diabetes.

Aim to eat a similar amount of carbohydrate at each meal.

Your Dietitian will give you more guidance on how much of these foods to include in your meal plan.

Carbohydrates can also be referred as starch, natural sugars, added sugars. Below are some examples. See also the Basic Food Guide for more examples of carbohydrate foods:

Sources of starch	Natural sugar	Added sugar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast cereals including rolled oats.</li> <li>• Bread and bread products including: roti, chapatti, pita bread, bagels, crumpets.</li> <li>• Crackers, crispbreads, cabin bread</li> <li>• Grains including: rice, noodles, pasta, couscous, quinoa, vermicelli, buckwheat, sago, semolina.</li> <li>• Legumes including: chickpeas, lentils, dried peas, beans, dahl, baked beans, kidney/haricot beans.</li> <li>• Starchy vegetables including: potato, kumara, corn, parsnip, taro, green banana, tapioca, breadfruit, yams, cassava.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sugar</li> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• Yoghurt</li> <li>• Milk</li> <li>• Honey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jam</li> <li>• Cakes</li> <li>• Biscuits</li> <li>• Scones</li> <li>• Muffins</li> <li>• Ice-cream</li> <li>• Fruit Juice</li> <li>• Syrups</li> </ul>

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# Simple tips on carbohydrates

## 1. Choose wholegrain options

- Wholegrain carbohydrates are digested more slowly in the body and result in a more gradual and sustained rise in glucose levels. Foods that cause a slow rise in glucose levels is known as having a low glycaemic index (G.I.)
- Eat wholegrain breads, cereals, and crackers. Examples: Rolled oats, Weetbix, Burgen or Vogel's bread, Vita-wheat crackers
- Change from white pasta and rice to the wholemeal or brown varieties

## 2. Limit carbohydrate portions to the size of your fist

- Choose one fist size portion of all of your carbohydrate foods at each meal.
- Follow the healthy plate model of  $\frac{1}{4}$  carbohydrates,  $\frac{1}{4}$  protein and  $\frac{1}{2}$  your plate vegetables to keep you full at each meal.
- If having a second portion of a meal, choose only protein or vegetables at the second helping.

## 3. Consider natural sugars

All carbohydrate foods increase your glucose levels. Some products contain “no added sugars”, but can still contain natural sugars.

Natural sugars are found in sugar cane, fruit, dried fruits, honey, syrups, juices, milk and milk products. It is important to be aware of how much natural sugar you are consuming.

- Limit fruit to 2-4 medium size fruit (one handful) per day.
- Spread your fruit serves over the day rather than eating at once.
- Drain canned fruit well
- Avoid fruit juice (even with ‘no added sugar’) as it contains high amounts of natural sugars
- Eat dried fruit in small amounts (e.g. 1 tablespoon sultanas) as it is high in natural sugar.

## 4. Limit added sugars

This is sugar which is added to foods to sweeten them. Added sugars are found in baked products, fizzy drinks, lollies, chocolate, muesli bars, jam, jellies, milkshakes, sweet desserts, and some breakfast cereals.



**Dietitians NZ**

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*We'd love to hear from you.*  
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