

Carbohydrate counting using food labels

This resource is for people with diabetes. It is a step by step guide using the information on food labels to count the amount of carbohydrates you are eating. This guide is for more advanced carbohydrate counting.

How do I find how many carbohydrates I am eating using the per serve information on a label?

The per serve amount on a label can be used to find the amount of carbohydrate you are eating of a packaged product. It is best used when eating whole items such as biscuits. See below how to work out carbohydrate amount based on the per serve column, using the example of eating 2 of the biscuits below:

Example nutrition label: Biscuits

Nutrition Information		
Serving Size: 1 biscuit		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy	428kJ	2060kJ
Protein	0.7g	3.3g
Fat	4.7g	22.6g
Saturated fat	2.4g	11.4g
Carbohydrate	14g	67.9g
Sugar	7.7g	37.1g

Step 1: Count, measure or weigh the amount of food you ate

Question: How many biscuits did you eat?

Answer: 2 biscuits.

Step 2: Look at the serving size on the label

Question: How many biscuits is a serving on the label?

Answer: 1 biscuit

Nutrition Information		
Serving Size: 1 biscuit		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy	428kJ	2060kJ
Protein	0.7g	3.3g
Fat	4.7g	22.6g
Saturated fat	2.4g	11.4g
Carbohydrate	14g	67.9g
Sugar	7.7g	37.1g

Step 3: Compare how much you ate to the serving size

Question: Did you eat the same amount as the serving size?

Answer: No

Question: How many serves did you eat?

Answer: 2 serves (2 biscuits = 2 serves)

Tip: look at carbohydrate rather than sugar

Step 4: Look at carbohydrate content per serve

Question: How many carbohydrates is written in the per serve column?

Answer: 14g

Nutrition Information		
Serving Size: 1 biscuit		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy	428kJ	2060kJ
Protein	0.7g	3.3g
Fat	4.7g	22.6g
Saturated fat	2.4g	11.4g
Carbohydrate	14g	67.9g
Sugar	7.7g	37.1g

Step 5: Multiply the number of serves you ate (step 3) by the carbohydrate content per serve (step 4)

Question: How many carbohydrates are in the 2 biscuits you ate?

Calculation: $2 \times 14\text{g}$ (Step 3 x Step 4)

Answer: 28g of carbohydrate in 2 biscuits

How do I find how many carbohydrates I am eating using the per 100g information on a label?

The per 100g amount can be used to find the amount of carbohydrate you are eating of a packaged product. You can also use the 100ml amount for drinks. It is best used when you know the weight of the food or volume of the drink you are eating or drinking. See the example below of eating 50g of chips (1/2 of a 100g packet of chips).

Step 1: Weigh the amount of food you ate

Question: What amount of the chips did you eat?

Answer: 50g (1/2 of a 100g packet)

Tip: Use digital kitchen scales

Example nutrition label: Chips

Nutrition Information		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy	654kJ	2180kJ
Protein	2.13g	7.1g
Fat	10.4g	34.8g
Saturated fat	1.1g	3.5g
Carbohydrate	13.2g	44g
Sugar	0.5g	1.7g

Step 2: Divide the amount you ate by 100

This is a consensus document from Dietitian/ Nutritionists from the Nutrition Education Materials Online, "NEMO", team.

Disclaimer: www.health.qld.gov.au/global/disclaimer

Copyright: www.health.qld.gov.au/global/copyright-statement

Reviewed: October 2022

Due for review: October 2024



Question: What amount of chips did you eat compared to 100g?

Calculation: $50 \div 100$

Answer: 0.5

Step 3: Look at the carbohydrate content per 100g

Question: How many carbohydrates is written in the per 100g column?

Answer: 44g

Tip: look at carbohydrate rather than sugar

Step 4: Multiply the amount you ate compared to 100g (step 2) by carbohydrate content per 100g (step 3)

Question: How many carbohydrates are in the 50g of chips you ate?

Calculation: $0.5 \times 44\text{g}$ (Step 2 x Step 3)

Answer: 22g of carbohydrate in 50g of chips

Key messages:

- Use the step by step guide above to work out the amount of carbohydrates you eat.
- Your phone calculator can be helpful to work out the numbers in the steps.
- The package serving size may be different from the amount of food you eat.
- You can use the 100g column if you know the weight of your food, or the 100ml column if you know the volume of your drinks.
- Look at the carbohydrate (not sugar) amount written on the label.