

# Mastering the label lingo

## Carbohydrates



With all the media focus on low-carbohydrate, no-carbohydrate or even high-carbohydrate diets, it can be confusing to understand how much of this food group to include in your diet. The good news is food labels can help take away the confusion by giving you the Percent Daily Value (PDV) for a serving of carbohydrates in your daily eating plan.

When looking at the “Total Carbohydrate” value on the Nutrition Facts label, take note of the “Dietary Fiber” and “Sugars” values, too. Keep these helpful facts about carbohydrates in mind when making your food choices.

- Fiber and sugars are types of carbohydrates. Healthy sources like fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains can reduce the risk of heart disease and improve digestive functioning.
- Whole grain foods can't always be identified by color or name, such as multi-grain or wheat. Look for the whole grain listed first in the ingredient list, such as whole wheat, brown rice or whole oats.
- There isn't a Percent Daily Value for sugar, but you can compare the sugar content in grams among products and choose foods with fewer sugar grams.
- Limit foods with added sugars (sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn or maple syrup), which add calories but not other nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals.
- Make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few items in the ingredients list.



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# Counting carbs



Knowing how many carbohydrates are in one portion of what you're eating is the key to carb control. One choice in this food group equals about 15 grams of carbohydrate. By knowing how many carbohydrates are in a serving and how many servings you eat, tracking your carbohydrate intake will be easy as pie.

## Be choosy with your carbohydrates

Try these suggestions for adding healthier carbs to your diet:

- For breakfast, choose whole grains. If you like hot cereals, go for old-fashioned or steel-cut oats. If you prefer cold cereal, look for one that lists whole wheat, whole oats, or other whole grain first on the ingredient list.
- Add whole-grain breads to your lunch or snacks. Look for whole wheat or another whole grain listed first in the ingredient list.
- Pass on the potatoes. Instead, eat brown rice with your dinner.
- Prepare some whole wheat pasta. If it's too chewy for you, look for one made with half whole-wheat flour and half white flour.
- Eat up beans. Beans are a super fiber source as well as a great source of protein.

Put your *Label Lingo* skills to work with the Personal Health Manager's *Eat Right* feature where you can use food labels to help build your weekly menus. This is just one of the many wellness tools available to you from Blue Access<sup>®</sup> for Members.