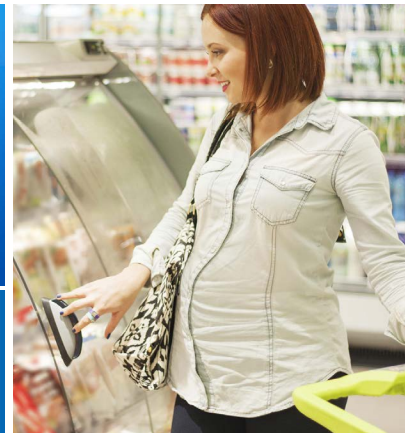


Diet for treating gestational diabetes



You have gestational diabetes and your doctor wants you to meet with a nutritionist to adjust your diet. While you wait for your appointment, this fact sheet will help you plan your meals and grocery shopping.

You'll receive more information when you see the nutritionist, who will advise you based on your nutritional needs and will answer your questions. This fact sheet will help you prepare for that visit.

Why is my diet so important?

It's important for many reasons:

- To help you maintain a normal blood sugar (glycemia) level. This is especially important for pregnant women. To learn more about this, see our fact sheet on gestational diabetes.
- To ensure both you and your baby are getting the energy and nutrients you need for your health.
- To ensure adequate weight gain throughout your pregnancy.
- Have less fatigue and low energy.



I've been told to watch the amount of "carbs" I eat. What are those?

Carbohydrates are all the sugars you eat. They affect your blood sugar levels.

What foods contain carbohydrates?

The main sources of carbohydrates are:

- sugar, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup, molasses, candy, chocolate, cakes, pastries, soft drinks, sweetened cereals, etc.
- starchy foods, such as bread, pasta, rice, semolina, and legumes
- fruits, fruit juices, and some vegetables (such as potatoes, corn, green peas, plantain)
- milk, milk products (except cheese), and their substitutes

Can I still eat carbohydrates?

Yes. In fact, it's important to keep eating them, both for your health and for your baby's growth. Don't eliminate them from your diet.

However, you should:

- eat fewer carbohydrates
- spread them over 3 balanced meals and 2 to 3 snacks a day (Appendix 1 shows what a balanced meal looks like)
- choose them wisely: focus more on foods that contain "slow" carbohydrates (absorbed more slowly)



Foods that contain more fiber are recommended, as they slow down the absorption of carbohydrates. These include whole grain products, legumes, and whole fruits and vegetables (rather than juices).

It's preferable to avoid eating (or to eat as little as possible):

- sugar, honey, jam, brown sugar, molasses, maple syrup, candy, cakes, cookies, etc.
- fruit juices

The carbohydrates in these foods will cause a rapid rise in your blood sugar level because they are absorbed quickly in the intestine.



DID YOU KNOW?

The **protein foods** group includes foods of both animal (meat, poultry, eggs, fish, etc.) and vegetable (nuts and seeds, nut butter, legumes, tofu, tempeh, textured vegetable protein, etc.) origin. **These foods contain few or no carbohydrates, except for legumes. When you're hungry, you can eat more of these foods.** They don't affect blood sugar levels.

Foods in this group are also an important source of protein. Protein is a kind of building material. It helps your baby grow. It also lowers the rate of absorption of carbohydrates.



How many carbohydrates can I eat?

Your **nutritionist** will determine how much you can eat at each meal, and the total per day. This amount varies from one pregnant woman to another. It depends on your age, weight, height, level of physical activity, etc.

To stay within the amount allowed, **you'll have to learn how to calculate the carbohydrate content of foods.**

Nutrition Facts	
Per 6 oz (178 ml)	
Amount % Daily Value*	
Calories 170	
Fat 1,5 g	2%
Saturated 1 g	5%
Cholesterol 10 mg	3%
Sodium 80 mg	3%
Carbohydrate 33 g	11%
Fibre 0 g	0%
Sugars 27 g	
Protein 5 g	10%

Nutritional label

Appendix 2 explains how to calculate the amount of carbohydrates in pre-packaged foods based on the nutritional label.

How can I help keep my blood sugar level stable throughout the day?

- Don't skip meals.
- Eat at regular times.
- Maintain a period of 4 to 6 hours between meals.
- When you have a snack that contains carbohydrates, wait 2 hours before your next meal.

Can I use sugar substitutes (sweeteners)?

Sugar substitutes, such as aspartame (Equal), acesulfame-potassium (Sunett), stevia and sucralose (Splenda), and sugar alcohols (maltitol, xylitol, erythritol, monk fruit, etc.), as well as foods containing them (light soft drinks, light puddings, etc.) are permitted in moderation during pregnancy.

However, saccharin (Sucaryl) and cyclamates (Sugar Twin, Weight Watchers) should be avoided, as their effects on the development of the fetus are unknown.

What should I drink?

Drink as much water as you want. This can help control your blood sugar level. You can add lemon juice or fresh ginger to it.

For a nutritious drink: cow's milk or unsweetened plant-based milk are good choices. These drinks will provide you with calcium and vitamin D.

Avoid fruit juices, energy drinks, and sodas as much as possible. Their carbohydrates are absorbed very quickly.

Coffee and tea are allowed, not to exceed 1 to 2 cups per day. If you take more, the caffeine may affect your baby.

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

Write down your questions. You can ask your nutritionist at your appointment. At any time, you can call the **CHUM Patient Health Line at 514 890-8086** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).



USEFUL RESOURCES

Diabetes Québec:
For more information on gestational diabetes and diet.
InfoDiabetes:
> **1 800 361-3504, ext. 233**
> **diabete.qc.ca/en/**
Type "gestational diabetes" into the search bar.
Also consult their free download:
Your Pocket Guide to Dining Out.

Guidebook *From Tiny Tot to Toddler*:
> **inspq.qc.ca/en/tiny-tot**
In the Pregnancy section, read the section on nutrition during pregnancy and the section on special needs.

Government of Canada:
For general information on reading nutritional labels
> **canada.ca**
Click on Health → Food and Nutrition → Food labels.

To learn more about pregnancy, delivery, or follow-up care, visit our internet site.



Videos, other fact sheets, and more resources are available at:

centredesnaissanceschum.com



Questions

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

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The picture below shows how much space each food group should occupy on the plate, for balanced meals.



ATTENTION

The amount that can be taken from each food group varies from woman to woman. Your nutritionist will guide you.



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Here are 5 steps to calculate the amount of carbohydrates in a commercially prepared food.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 250 ml (1 cup)	
Amount	% Daily Value*
Calories 170	
Fat 1,5 g	2%
Saturated 1 g	5%
Cholesterol 10 mg	3%
Sodium 80 mg	3%
Carbohydrate 20 g	8%
Fibre 5 g	20%
Sugars 27 g	
Protein 5 g	10%
<hr/>	
Vitamin A	15 %
Vitamin C	0 %
Vitamin D	20 %
Calcium	20 %

Example of nutritional label.

STEP 1

Note the portion size
In our example, it's 250 ml (1 cup).

STEP 2

Note the amount of carbohydrates
In our example, it's 20 g.

STEP 3

Note the amount of fibre
In our example, it's 5 g.

STEP 4

Do the following calculation:
Amount of carbohydrates - Amount of fibre = _____

In the example:

$$20 \text{ g} - 5 \text{ g} = 15 \text{ g}$$

So, one 250 ml (1 cup) portion of this food contains **15 g of carbohydrates**.

STEP 5

Adjust the result.

Adjust the result of Step 4 based on the portion you will eat.

For example, 1/2 portion of this food (125 ml or 1/2 cup) will contain 7.5 g of carbohydrates.



Fibre helps control blood sugar levels. Eat more high-fibre foods, that is, foods that contain 4 grams or more of fibre per portion.

Your nutritionist will review this calculation with you. While waiting for your appointment, do the exercises on the following pages.



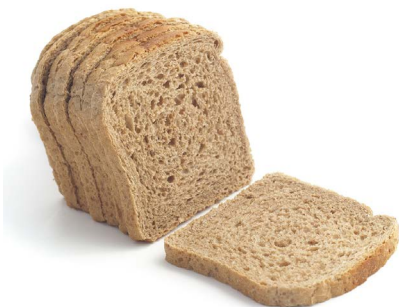
Test yourself with these carbohydrate calculation exercises.

Use this nutritional label for cooked brown rice to answer questions 1 and 2.

- 1 You want to prepare brown rice. If you eat 1 cup of cooked brown rice, how many carbohydrates (g) will you take in?
- a) 42 g
 - b) 21 g
 - c) 23 g
- 2 You add 1 cup of green vegetables (0 carbohydrates) and 1 chicken breast (0 carbohydrates) to your meal. How many carbohydrates will you take in?
- a) 46 g
 - b) 21 g
 - c) 42 g

Answer question 3 based on the information provided.

- 3 One slice (25 g) of whole wheat bread contains a total of 11 g of carbohydrates and 2 g of fibre. You want to eat 2 slices of this bread. What amounts of carbohydrates (g) and fibre (g) will you take in?
- a) 22 g of carbohydrates and 4 g of fibre
 - b) 36 g of carbohydrates and 8 g of fibre
 - c) 18 g of carbohydrates and 4 g of fibre



Nutrition Facts	
Per 195 ml (1 cup)	
Amount % Daily Value*	
Calories 216	
Fat 2 g	3%
Saturated 0 g	0%
Cholesterol 0 mg	0%
Sodium 10 mg	1%
Carbohydrate 46 g	15%
Fibre 4 g	14%
Sugars 1 g	
Protein 5 g	
<hr/>	
Vitamin A	15 %
Vitamin C	0 %
Vitamin D	18 %
Calcium	15 %

Nutritional label on a package of brown rice.

Use these nutritional labels for yogurt to answer the following questions:

You're at the grocery store and you want to buy some yogurt for a snack. You compare the nutritional labels of 2 yogurts: Yogurt A and Yogurt B.

4 In terms of total carbohydrates, which would be your better choice?

- A B

5 In terms of protein, which would be your better choice?

- A B

6 Which yogurt will you decide to buy? Discuss your choice with your nutritionist.

- A B

Yogurt A

Nutrition Facts	
Per 5.3 oz (157 ml)	
Amount	% Daily Value*
Calories 80	
Fat 0 g	0%
Saturated 0 g	0%
Cholesterol 0 mg	0%
Sodium 60 mg	2%
Carbohydrate 6 g	2%
Fibre 0 g	0%
Sugars 6 g	
Protein 15 g	30%
<hr/>	
Vitamin A	0 %
Vitamin C	0 %
Vitamin D	0 %
Calcium	20 %

Yogurt B

Nutrition Facts	
Per 6 oz (178 ml)	
Amount	% Daily Value*
Calories 170	
Fat 1.5 g	2%
Saturated 1 g	5%
Cholesterol 10 mg	3%
Sodium 80 mg	3%
Carbohydrate 33 g	11%
Fibre 0 g	0%
Sugars 27 g	
Protein 5 g	10%
<hr/>	
Vitamin A	15 %
Vitamin C	0 %
Vitamin D	20 %
Calcium	20 %



Answers: 1-A 2-C 3-C 4-A 5-A 6-A

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