

# From the Food Bank Kitchen

## Diabetes and Label Reading

Reading food labels can be tricky enough, and it becomes even harder for those with diabetes. Diabetes is a condition that affects how your body uses energy in the form of glucose from food. People with diabetes need to regulate their carbohydrate intake to try to keep their blood sugar levels within a healthy range. It is important to remember that all forms of carbohydrate, not just sugar, effect blood sugar levels. Diabetes cannot be cured, but it can usually be managed through diet, physical activity and, for some people, oral medication or insulin injections. **Knowing what things to look for on a food label can make managing your diabetes through your food choices much easier, and will help you to keep your glucose levels in check.**

See below for some diabetic meal and snack ideas that are quick and easy.

**Serving Size:** Start by looking at the serving size. All of the information on the label is based on the serving size listed. If you eat more, that means you'll be getting more calories, carbohydrates, sugars, sodium, and saturated fat.

**Amount Per Serving:** The information on the left side of the label provides the amount of nutrients per serving of the food. Be sure to look at the SERVING SIZE when comparing labels of similar foods. Nutrients that you'll want to limit are calories, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

**Look at total carbohydrate, not just sugar:** Evaluate the grams of *total* carbohydrates, which include sugar, complex carbohydrates, and fiber, rather than only the grams of sugar. Some major sources of carbohydrate include bread, rice, pasta, cereal, crackers, potatoes, fruit, dairy, starchy vegetables, and many packaged snacks like pretzels and granola bars. When looking at the grams of sugar, **four grams of sugar equals one teaspoon**. For example, if a food contains 18 grams of sugar, this equals about five teaspoons of sugar.

**Fiber:** Fiber is the plant part of foods that is only partially digested, and is associated with improved heart and digestive health. Beans, fruits, vegetables, and *whole grains* are all good sources. A product containing five grams of fiber or more per serving is considered an excellent source of fiber. Dietary guidelines suggest eating about 25 grams per of fiber day for women and 38 grams per day for men.

**Protein:** Snacks and meals containing protein *with* carbs will help to slow digestion and limit spikes in blood sugar. Look for carb foods containing protein, or combine your carb with a protein source. Protein sources include fish, poultry, meat, eggs, dairy, nuts, peanuts, seeds, soy, beans, and lentils.

**List of Ingredients:** Ingredient lists can also be a helpful tool. Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight. Those in the largest amounts are listed first. Look for foods listing a whole grain as the first ingredient, limit foods with *added sugars*, and try to avoid foods with hydrogenated vegetable oils. In general, the fewer ingredients in a food, the better.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 6.7 ounces (190 g) Servings Per Container 1	
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b> 100	<b>Calories From Fat</b> 6
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	0%
<b>Sodium</b> 11mg	0%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 23g	8%
Dietary Fiber 5g	21%
Sugars 18g	
<b>Protein</b> 0.5g	
Vitamin A 2%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium 1%	Iron 2%
* Percent Daily Value based on a 2000 calorie diet.	



### INGREDIENTS:

~~SUGAR, CORN STARCH,  
PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED  
VEGETABLE OIL (COTTONSEED,~~



INGREDIENTS: WHOLE WHEAT FLOUR  
(WHOLE GRAIN), CRACKED WHOLE WHEAT,

Source: diabetes.org "Taking a Closer Look at Labels"

November is National Diabetes Month

## What about sugar alcohols and sodium?

The use of sugar alcohols (sorbitol, xylitol and manitol) in a product does not necessarily mean the product is low in carbs or calories. Also, just because the package says "sugar free" on the outside, that does not mean that it is calorie or carbohydrate-free. Always remember to check the label for the grams of carbohydrate and calories.

Sodium does not affect blood glucose levels, but it does increase risk of heart disease, a concern for those with diabetes. It is recommended that adults aim for 2,300 mg of sodium or less per day in order to stay heart healthy.

## Peanut Butter Yogurt Apple Dip

Servings: 1

Source: [somethingswanky.com](http://somethingswanky.com)

Even if you don't like Greek yogurt, you'll enjoy this protein packed dip for apple slices that tastes like a dessert!

This recipe is for a single serving, but you can make as much as you'd like. Just follow the proportions of 1 part peanut butter, 1 part yogurt, ½ part honey.

Directions: Mix all ingredients together. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator if not eating right away.

- 1 Tbsp peanut butter
- 1 Tbsp vanilla Greek Yogurt (can substitute regular)
- ½ Tbsp honey

Nutrition Facts: Calories 140, Fat 8 gm, Saturated Fat 2 gm, Sodium 80 mg, Carb 13 gm, Fiber 1 gm. Sugars 11 gm, Protein 5 gm

## Low Carb Snack Combos

Listed below are a few low carb snack ideas that will curb hunger, while adding a nutritious energy boost to your day. All snack combos contain 20 grams of carb or less, plus a protein source to decrease the effect on blood sugar.

- ½ c raw or roasted chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- 5 whole wheat crackers + 1 piece string cheese
- ¼ c cottage cheese + ½ c canned or fresh fruit
- ½ c tuna salad + 8 mini rice cakes
- 1 small apple + 1½ oz cubed cheese
- Handful of nuts + handful of dried fruit
- 2 graham crackers + 2 Tbsp peanut butter
- 2 slices reduced sodium deli ham + ¼ c pineapple chunks
- Greek yogurt (optional: add 2 Tbsp of nuts)
- 1 hard boiled egg + 1 slice whole grain toast

## Veggie Skillet Supper

Servings: 6

Source: [diabetesforecast.org](http://diabetesforecast.org)

- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1 c chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 c frozen mixed vegetables
- 3 c uncooked egg noodles

- 4 c low sodium beef broth
- 1-2 c water
- ½ tsp salt and ½ tsp pepper

Nutrition Facts: Calories 285, Fat 8 gm, Saturated Fat 3 gm, Sodium 350 mg, Carbs 28 gm, Fiber 6 gm, Sugars 5 gm, Protein 23 gm

Directions: Place oil in large skillet. Add beef, onions, and garlic and cook until beef is browned. Add vegetables, salt, and pepper. Add the noodles and mix well. Add the broth and enough water to cover everything and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and cook until noodles are tender, approximately 15 minutes.

## Roasted Chicken with Sweet Potato

Servings: 4

Adapted from: [diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org)

- 1 lb chicken (boneless thighs or breasts recommended)
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil (canola or olive)
- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and diced\*
- 1 apple, cored and sliced
- 1 Tbsp honey
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ cup water
- ½ tsp salt

Nutrition Facts: Calories 300, Fat 12 gm, Saturated Fat 3 gm, Sodium 370 mg, Carbs 20 gm, Fiber 5 gm, Sugars 12 gm, Protein 29 gm

Directions: Preheat oven to 375°F. Cut the chicken and season with the rosemary. In a frying pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat and add chicken. Cook for 3 minutes per side, then transfer to a baking dish. Place the sweet potato and apple slices around the chicken. Drizzle honey evenly over sweet potato and apple slices, then sprinkle with cinnamon. Pour water over all. Bake for 45 minutes in the oven, uncovered. To serve, pour some of the juices over everything.

\*Can substitute winter squash such as acorn or butternut for sweet potato, if preferred.