

Carbohydrate counting for type 1 diabetes

This leaflet explains about carbohydrate counting. It gives you the basic information before you meet with the paediatric diabetes dietitians. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of the diabetes team.

What are carbohydrates?

Carbohydrate is a nutrient and source of energy found in foods such as potatoes, rice, pasta, cereals, milk, fruit, sweets and sugary drinks. Different foods contain different types of carbohydrate:

- **Starchy** – potatoes, rice, pasta, noodles, bread, cereals, couscous, lentils, injera and products made from flour
- **Fructose** – fruit and fruit juice
- **Lactose** – milk, yoghurt, ice cream, custard
- **Sucrose** – table sugar, syrup, sweets and sugary drinks.

During digestion your body breaks down the carbohydrate from the food you eat into glucose which the body uses for energy. This glucose enters your bloodstream and causes your blood glucose to rise. Your body needs insulin to be able to use this glucose for energy. The more carbohydrate you eat, the more insulin you will need to keep your blood glucose within your target range. Knowing how much carbohydrate is in the food and drink your child takes in will help you estimate how much insulin they need.

What is carbohydrate counting and how will it help you and your child?

Carbohydrate counting involves matching the insulin your child takes to how much carbohydrate they are going to eat or drink. Carbohydrate counting is necessary to achieve the best results in diabetes blood glucose control. Carbohydrate counting means you can eat a variety of foods that you enjoy, and eat at times that are convenient to you as a family rather than set meal times.

How can you carbohydrate count?

Carbohydrate counting can be done using the Carbs & Cals book or phone app (for a small charge), food labels or carbohydrate tables. The most important thing is a set of weighing scales.

Your child will be prescribed an insulin to carbohydrate ratio. For example, '1:10' means 1 unit of insulin is needed for every 10g of carbohydrate. While you are in hospital you will meet with the dietitians in the diabetes team who will support you in working out the carbohydrate in your normal family meals.

It would be useful if you could start thinking about the foods your child normally eats and which of these foods you think contain carbohydrate.

What next?

You will be given a food diary to start keeping a diary of what foods your child eats and how many carbohydrates they contain. Your nurse will help you make a start on this until you meet our diabetes dietitian.

Useful sources of information

Diabetes UK, for more information about diabetes and carbohydrate counting,
web: www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Managing-your-diabetes/Carb-counting/

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about carbohydrate counting, please contact the diabetes dietitians, **tel:** 020 7188 4614, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 9am-5pm, and Friday 9am-12.30pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web:** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **tel:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm,
email: letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **tel:** 020 7188 8801, **email:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint, contact the complaints department, **tel:** 020 7188 3514, **email:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch, **tel:** 020 7188 8815, **email:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **tel:** 111,
web: www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web:** www.nhs.uk

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