

# The importance of carbohydrates during pregnancy



What are carbohydrates? These are starches and sugars found in foods. While they can affect your blood sugar levels, you will still need healthy carbohydrates to keep your baby healthy during pregnancy.

Starch and sugar can come from a variety of food sources — both naturally and artificially. It's important to know the source of the carbohydrates so that you can choose healthy options that will benefit you and your baby.

Starch and sugar	Sources
Starch	Breads, tortillas, pasta, rice, cereals, potatoes, beans, corn, peas, and lentils
Natural sugars	Fruits, milk, and some vegetables
Added sugars	Desserts, jello, candy, soda, other sweetened drinks, jams, and syrups

## How to spread out carbohydrates — part 1

While carbohydrates are good for maintaining energy, it is also important to know how much you should eat and when. Here are some tips on how to maintain a healthy diet that includes carbohydrates.

- 1 Space your meals and snacks that contain carbohydrates about 2-3 hours apart.
  - This allows for your blood sugar levels to normalize between each meal
  - Eating again too soon could result in higher blood sugar
- 2 Do not go more than four hours without eating a carbohydrate.
- 3 Never skip a meal.

## How many carbohydrates do I need?

We recommend about **12 small portions** of carbohydrate-rich foods, or about 180 g of total carbohydrates. Refer to the information on **carbohydrate portions** that lists recommended food options.



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- 4 Carbohydrate amounts should be the same from one day to the next, especially if you are using medication or insulin.
- 5 Always carry healthy snacks such as fruit, nuts, wheat crackers, or a high protein granola bar when you leave home just in case you encounter any delays or emergencies.

### How to spread out carbohydrates — part 2

#### Breakfast

A breakfast low in carbohydrates usually works best for pregnant women. When you're pregnant, hormones can raise your blood sugar more after the first food you eat that day.

- Breakfast should only have 1 carbohydrate portion, or about 15 grams of carbohydrates
- 1 slice of bread or 1 corn tortilla is considered one carbohydrate portion
- Carbohydrates should be eaten with protein foods such as eggs or cheese
- Avoid breakfast cereals as these usually cause higher blood sugar, especially in the morning

#### Lunch and dinner

Lunch and dinner are your main meals throughout the day.

- Main meals should have 3 carbohydrate portions, or about 45 grams of carbohydrates each
- You may need smaller portions of your favorite lunch and dinner foods

#### Bedtime snack

To satisfy your late night craving, choose healthy snacks before bedtime. It can also help provide a restful sleep and add needed nutrition for your baby.

- Too many hours without food overnight can make your blood sugar higher the next morning. Try to have between 8 to 10 hours overnight without food.
- Always include protein, but not fruit or cereal

## Morning and afternoon snacks

Eating healthy snacks during the day is also a good source of energy.

- Snacks should have 1 or 2 carbohydrate portions, or about 15-30 grams of carbohydrates
- Mid-day snacks will keep you from getting hungry, so you can eat a smaller lunch and dinner



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