

## Hidden Carbohydrate – Know What You Are Eating

Thanks to the Atkins Diet and the South Beach Diet craze, most people know the major sources of foods that contain carbohydrate: cake, pastries, potatoes, pasta, bread, crackers, popcorn, etc. But there are many other sources of carbohydrate that you may not realize you are eating. Since carbohydrate increases glucose levels it is important to know the amount of carbohydrate in the food you eat. The following are foods to look closely at when you make your food choices.

**Sugar Free Foods:** Foods labeled “sugar-free” or “no-sugar-added” are not necessarily carbohydrate free. How much or little carbohydrate they contain depends on what sweeteners were used as well as other ingredients in the food. “No sugar added” simply means no *extra* sugar was added during the processing or packaging. These foods could still be high in carbohydrates - these products often use sweeteners other than sugar to provide a sweet taste.

One group of ingredients used to provide the sweet taste in sugar-free foods is called Polyols or Sugar Alcohol. Common names are sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol. Sugar alcohols may have a lower effect on glucose levels and do contain fewer calories than sugar. As they are carbohydrate-based ingredients, they do not have any advantages in improving overall diabetes control.

**Artificial Sweeteners:** Not all sweeteners are alike. Some, like high fructose corn syrup (an artificial sweetener), contain just as many carbohydrates as the natural sweeteners you already know about (sugar, syrup, honey and molasses). However some artificial sweeteners like the ones used to sweeten Diet Coke<sup>TM</sup> are designed not to contain carbohydrates. There are currently five artificial sweeteners approved for use by the FDA that contain no calories and no carbohydrate: acesulfame-potassium, aspartame, neotame, saccharin and sucralose. It is important to read labels.

**Protein Bars:** Many times these high protein bars are also high in carbohydrate. Check the labels to know what your favorites contain:

- Jenny Craig 1.97 oz Oatmeal Raisin Bar contains 35 grams of carbohydrate
- Luna Bars – an average 1.5 oz bar contain 27 grams of carbohydrate
- GNC ProCrunch Peanut Butter Crunch bars contain 34 grams of carbohydrate

**Starchy Vegetables:** A few vegetables contain enough carbohydrate that they are considered separately. Potatoes, peas, beans, corn and winter squash all have much more carbohydrate in them than the rest of your vegetables. Starchy vegetables should be treated like a starchy carbohydrate such as pasta, half a cup is about 15 grams of carbohydrate.

**Salad Dressing:** So you decide to be healthy and eat a salad with lots of non-starchy vegetables. But what dressing you use and how much you use is important to consider. Most salad dressing nutrition labels list 2 tablespoons as a serving size. For example, Wish-Bone<sup>®</sup> Ranch Dressing contains 2 grams of carbohydrate for a serving size of 2 tablespoons. But portion sizes being what they are, you are probably getting double the amount of carbohydrate. When you get the small container of dressing on the side, that is about ¼ cup or 4 tablespoons. Ranch Dressing doesn't seem so bad, if you double it that's still only 4 grams.

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Wish-Bone<sup>®</sup> Light Thousand Island has 9 grams of carbohydrate in 2 tablespoons. So if you double that, you are now eating 18 grams of carbohydrate. Or Newman's Own Lighten Up Raspberry & Walnut Dressing contains 7 grams of carbohydrate, with 4 tablespoons so you would be eating 14 grams of carbohydrate.

To learn more about carbohydrate and their importance in your diabetes management, attend a community education event in your area (<https://www.minimed.com/events/intro.do>).

For additional resources, explore [www.RealDiabetesControl.com](http://www.RealDiabetesControl.com)

## Additional Resources

### Online carbohydrate food lists

[www.CalorieKing.com](http://www.CalorieKing.com)

[www.ars.usda.gov/ba/bhnrc/ndl](http://www.ars.usda.gov/ba/bhnrc/ndl)

[www.nutritiondata.com](http://www.nutritiondata.com)

### Nutrition and Carbohydrate Counting Books

American Diabetes Association ([www.store.diabetes.org](http://www.store.diabetes.org))  
800-ADA-ORDER (800-232-6733)

Warshaw HS, Kulkarni K. *Complete Guide to Carb Counting*. American Diabetes Association; 2004.

American Dietetic Association ([www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org))

The Calorie King<sup>®</sup> Calorie Fat and Carbohydrate Counter by Allan Borushek  
([www.CalorieKing.com](http://www.CalorieKing.com))