

Carbohydrate and Diets

One area of confusion for diabetics and their diets is carbohydrates. So, should you eat carbohydrates or avoid them?

Carbohydrates have a direct influence on [blood sugar levels](#) and so diets followed by people with diabetes tend to focus either on the quantity of carbohydrate intake or the speed at which carbohydrates are absorbed by the body.

Patients diagnosed with diabetes are generally recommended by health professionals to follow a low GI diet rather than a low-carb diet. There is much to read and learn on different management techniques



Carbohydrates are found in foods such as bread, potatoes and rice

What is a carbohydrate controlled diet?

A carbohydrate controlled diet is a diet in which carbohydrate intake is either limited or set at a particular value.

Setting carbohydrate intake at set values or limits can be used by people with diabetes help stabilise blood glucose levels.

Fixed carbohydrate intakes

A diet involving fixed intakes of carbohydrate through the day can help to simply diabetes control and may be helpful to people on [insulin](#), and particularly those on fixed dose insulin regimens.

Having a fixed intake of carbohydrate each day offers less flexibility in terms of meals but can offer more consistency over blood glucose control. People with type 1 diabetes will still need to have competence in carbohydrate counting.

Restricted carbohydrate diets

Restricted carbohydrate diets set a limit on how much carbohydrate you take in over the course of a day or for each meal. Low carbohydrate diets are a form of restricted carbohydrate diet.

Restricted carbohydrate diets may specify a maximum value of carbohydrate intake. However, sometimes this is not needed, particularly if the diet suggests avoiding many of the kind of foods with higher carbohydrate intakes.

How do restricted carbohydrate diets work?

Restricting carbohydrates from a diet can help to reduce hunger, particularly in people with diabetes, as it can help prevent wider swings in blood glucose levels that can be responsible for causing hunger.

If carbohydrate and calorie intake is kept low enough, it can help to promote regular ketosis in which the body breaks down fat tissues to convert them into [ketones](#), an alternative energy source to glucose. The breaking down of fat is one reason why very low carbohydrate diets can help with [weight loss](#).

Whilst restricted carbohydrate diets can help with weight loss, they may also be used primarily for maintaining good blood glucose control. If following a low carbohydrate diet, an increased intake of fat and protein may be needed to prevent weight loss occurring.