

## Learning Carbs by Color

Handout for Advancements in Diabetes: "Simplified Carbohydrate Education Approaches"—3/16/2021

It's easy to identify carbohydrates (carbs) once you learn some basic tips. Carbs are your body's main source of energy. The amount and type of carbs (sugars, starch, and fiber) that you eat affects blood sugar levels. Learning to identify carbs is the first step in being able to plan balanced meals and snacks. Work with a dietitian or diabetes educator to decide the right amount of carbs for you to meet your energy needs and diabetes goals.

### WHITE — REFINED GRAINS/SUGARS

Grains refined into white flour, and sugar refined from natural sources are concentrated carbs. They raise blood sugars rapidly. Added sugars are sugars that are put in foods during processing. Foods or drinks made from refined carbs include: white breads, soda crackers, flour tortillas, sugar sweetened drinks, desserts, and sweets. Try to limit these.



### TAN, BROWN — WHOLE GRAINS

Carbs from whole grain: wheat, oats, rye, rice, corn meal, barley, and others tend to be tan or brown in color. This color pattern can be helpful when looking for carbs in meals.

Whole grains, like 100% whole wheat, corn, or brown rice have their fiber intact when ground or processed. Dietary fiber aids in slowing digestion and absorption, slowing the rise in blood sugars.



### WHITE— CARBS IN DAIRY

Dairy products like milk, yogurt and milk substitutes (i.e. soy milk) contain carbs in the form of milk sugar (lactose). Dairy foods provide nutrients: calcium, protein, vitamins A & D and potassium, that are vital for health. Consider the carbs from dairy when planning meals.

**COLORFUL CARBS**

**Fruits** come in many bright colors. Whole fruit: fresh, canned, or frozen are best. Fruit provides many essential nutrients. Eat at least 1 cup daily.



**HERITAGE CARBS**



**Starchy vegetables:** varieties of corn, beans, potatoes and hard shelled squashes were first domesticated and consumed by ancestors of American Indians. These colorful carbs are highly nutritious and a good source of energy, B vitamins, antioxidants and fiber. Starchy vegetables add color to meals and are a nutritious alternate to grains.

**Let's Identify Carbs on My Native Plate**

1. Identify the **grains and starchy vegetables** using the color patterns of white, tan or brown, or colorful, on the 4 plates shown here. *Answers below the sample plates*
2. Next, try to find the carbs in fruits and dairy foods. *Answers: berries, strawberries/ yogurt, apple slices, canned peaches.*
3. Bonus question: Can you guess which foods have no carbs or are low in carbs?

*Answers: meat, egg, non-starchy vegetables: salad, carrots, celery, tomato, zucchini, greens*

**MY NATIVE PLATE**

**Remember:**

- Stay active
- Drink water
- Use a 9-inch plate

**Notes:**

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**More Ideas for MY NATIVE PLATE**

**Plate 2**

Pictured here: Yogurt with strawberries, salsa, scrambled eggs with zucchini, tortilla, coffee

**Plate 3**

Pictured here: Apple, carrots, celery, lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, beef patty, bun, unsweetened tea

**Plate 4**

Pictured here: Peaches, salad, beef and vegetable stew, cornbread, water

*Answers to question 1: plate 1, rice, plate 2, tortilla, plate 3, hamburger bun, plate 4, cornbread*