



Some carb choices better than others

I recently had a physical, and the results of my blood sugar test were a little high. Since then, I started examining carbohydrate amounts on Nutrition Facts labels, and am surprised at how many carbs are in one of my favorite foods, black beans. Can I fit black beans into a lower-carb diet?

You don't say how low in carbohydrates you want to go, but the U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that adults get 45-65 percent of calories from carbohydrates, with 10-35 percent from protein and 20-35 percent from fat. To do the math, you need to know that carbohydrates and protein each have 4 calories per gram, and fat has 9 calories per gram. So, if you're eating, say, 1,800 calories a day, and want to trim carbohydrates to 45 percent of your diet, you still can have 200 grams or about 800 calories a day in carbohydrates.

Instead of trimming all sources of carbohydrates, nutrition experts recommend consumers focus on cutting way back on added sugars and refined grains, including products made from white flour instead of whole wheat or other whole grains. Carbohydrates found naturally in foods such as beans, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and low-fat or nonfat dairy are generally considered

to be healthful. They provide important nutrients and, often, lots of fiber — an important consideration.

A half-cup of black beans has about 23 grams of total carbohydrates, with 6 or more of those grams as fiber. Because the human body cannot digest fiber, it doesn't contribute to increasing blood sugar. Many dietitians recommend that when eating a high-fiber food — one with 5 grams of fiber or more — you should subtract the fiber grams from the total carbohydrate count. In the case of black beans, you would subtract 6 grams of fiber from 23 grams of total carbohydrate, for a final carbohydrate count of 17 grams.

Fiber is important for a few reasons. First, it helps you feel full without added calories, and it helps keep your digestive system "regular." Also, research indicates that people who eat 20 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories consumed, which would be 36 grams of fiber on an 1,800-calorie-a-day diet, have better blood sugar control. The standard recommendation is to eat 14 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories. Most Americans don't get that much.

So, go ahead and enjoy those black beans. They'll do you good.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1043, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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