Who is the leaflet for? What is its aim?

This leaflet is for young people with diabetes. Its aim is to give a general picture of how carbohydrate counting can help with looking after your diabetes in a flexible and personalised way.

What is Carbohydrate Counting?

All the food you eat is made up of carbohydrate, protein and fat or of mixture of these. It is carbohydrate that has the biggest effect on your blood glucose levels after a meal. After you have eaten it, carbohydrate is turned into glucose and then goes into the blood to be delivered to the rest of the body where it is used for energy. Insulin acts as a key and “unlocks” the gate for the glucose to move from the blood into the cells. The more carbohydrate that you eat, the more insulin is required for the glucose to enter the cells to be used effectively.

If not enough insulin is given, the blood glucose level will be high and if too much is given, it might go low. With carbohydrate counting, the idea is to get the balance right between insulin and carbohydrate, not matter what, or when you eat. With fixed insulin doses, where you do not vary the dose with the amount of carbohydrate that you are eating, you will sometimes struggle to keep your blood glucose levels within target ranges.

We hope that carbohydrate counting will give more freedom with eating and help with keeping those blood glucose levels within target.

The two big benefits of carbohydrate counting are:

- **Better quality of life** – increased flexibility for meals and appetite. Snacking is also not essential.

- **Better control** – you can plan the best amount of insulin to give for different meals you eat, thus improving your blood glucose control.

- **Increased Flexibility** – for days which are different eg sport, weekends and nights out with your friends. Carbohydrate counting will keep you in control of your diabetes while you do the things that you enjoy.
Frequently Asked Questions

Who should I ask?
There are members of our team, who are dieticians and can help you with this. Please make contact with one of them when you are in clinic and they will be happy to help. They run regular carbohydrate counting workshops at the Weston Centre where you and your family can learn using practical examples.

Isn’t it really complicated and time consuming?
No! To begin with, it may take some time to work out how much carbohydrate there is in your foods, but most people get to grips with it fairly quickly. The maths is very simple and easy to learn. Most people find that after a few weeks they have got the hang of it and really find it of benefit. We also have ‘smart blood glucose meters’. These meters can help you with working out how much insulin you need to have for the carbohydrates you have counted for.

What happens next?
The first step is to fill out a food diary for a week, recording what you eat, when you eat it, what your blood sugars are and how much insulin you have given.

What do I need?
You will need some scales, a calculator, carbs and cals book or app and somewhere to record all of the information.

What if it’s not for me?
We understand that carbohydrate counting is not for everyone. If the time is not right for you at the moment, we will help you to get the best out of your current injection regime. When you feel ready, just let us know!
Contacts/Further information

www.carbsandcals.com/app/app - application for Iphone and androids
www.carbsandcals.com - Carbs and Cals book
www.myfitnesspal.com/food/ - to help with nutritional information guidance

E-mail: Kidz.diabetes@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
Telephone: Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00 01223 274638
Out of hours: 01223 245151, ask for ‘child diabetes on rotawatch’

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team:
patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

Document history
Authors/ contact number
Pharmacist
Children’s services – 01223 245151
Nigel Gooding
Publish/Review date
November 2017/November 2020
Version number/Ref
V2/PIN3089/25112