



THE PLAIN DEALER

NUTRI-NEWS Q&A

Diabetes often complicates the purchase of bakery items

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I bought some ginger cookies at the grocery store bakery counter. The package lists the ingredients but not how much of each. I'm diabetic, so I need to know how much sugar is in them.

As far as your blood sugar is concerned, all carbohydrates count, whether from sugar, grain, honey or fruit. So the important issue for you in terms of blood-sugar control is the total carbohydrate in a serving, not the sugar content.

That still leaves you without the information you need. A standard nutrient label would tell you how much carbohydrate, fat, protein and calories are in a serving. The Food and Drug Administration exempts grocery stores and bakeries from providing nutrient labels on foods prepared on the premises. Many larger grocery stores can provide nutrient information on a product on request. It doesn't hurt to ask.

Another approach is to find similar packaged cookies with nutrient labels and use those to guesstimate how much carbohydrate is in the cookies you bought. Review your meal plan to see how cookies figure in. Your meal plan will be based on diabetic exchanges or carbohydrate servings. Examples?

A carbohydrate, fruit or starch choice will contain 15 grams of carbohydrate.

Two small sandwich cookies would count as about one carbohydrate and one fat choice.

Three gingersnaps would be one carbohydrate serving.

Your dietitian will have recommended how many carbohydrates or carbohydrate-containing exchanges to have at a meal or snack and how to match them with your medicine. Don't have a meal plan? Ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian with expertise in diabetes management.

The ingredient label will still provide some important information. Ingredients are listed from most to least, so you can get a sense of proportion. If pecans are the last ingredient in your pecan cookies, you know they won't be bursting with nuts. Check out what kind of fat is used. The presence of palm oil, butter and hydrogenated fat may signal the presence of saturated and trans fats, which will tend to raise blood cholesterol and increase risk of heart disease. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of people with diabetes.

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