Tips for Carbohydrate Label Reading

Tip # 1: Focus on the “Nutrition Facts” label
The information on the “Nutrition Facts” label is regulated and more reliable than other statements on food packages. The serving size of a food item is listed directly below the “Nutrition Facts” label. The serving size may or may not be the usual serving size that your child typically eats.

Tip # 2: Look at “Total Carbohydrate” not Sugars
“Total Carbohydrate” on the Nutrition Facts label will tell you the amount of carbohydrate in one serving of the food. Sugars, dietary fiber, other carbohydrates, and sugar alcohols are types of carbohydrate and are included in the “Total Carbohydrate” grams. You do not need to count sugars separately.

Tip # 3: Carbohydrate Label Claims
The terms “Low Carb Food”, “Net Carbs”, “Net Effect of Carbs”, “Low Impact Carbs”, or “Impact Carbs” are not approved label claims and are not a good way to choose foods for people with diabetes.

It is true, dietary fiber and sugar alcohols (i.e. maltitol, sorbitol, xylitol, lactitol) are not completely digested. When you eat foods that contain large amounts of these ingredients your blood sugar level may rise less than with other carbohydrates. You can use the steps to the right to count these carbohydrates.

Tip # 4: Calories Still Count
Even if a food is “low” in carbohydrate it may not be low in calories or a healthy food. Use common sense to meet your carbohydrate goals and do not lose track of the bigger picture. Take steps to build good eating habits and keep active. Use special foods if, and when, they help you meet your diabetes goals.