

Eating Exchange Game

Invented by

Mrs. Cheryl Janice Mason-Middleton

My spouse was recently diagnosed with borderline Type II Diabetes. As a part of that diagnosis, we were introduced to an eating plan called the Exchange Diet. At first, it was a bit confusing but with some research, we managed to find a quick and easy way to figure out how to plan our meals, and keep track of what we eat. This little essay is intended to share a little pocket game card that I devised to help us with this process.

The best thing is that we haven't deprived ourselves of our favorite foods, we've simply modified how much we eat, and made sure that we get a balanced diet.

On almost every food package sold in the United States is panel called the "Nutrition Facts" label. It shows what's in the food that you eat, and can give you some assistance in deciding how much you should eat at a meal.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/3 cup (23g) makes 8 fl oz prepared	
Servings Per Container about 32	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 80	Calories from Fat 0
%Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol less than 5mg	1%
Sodium 125mg	5%
Potassium 390mg	10%
Total Carbohydrate 12g	4%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 12g	
Protein 8g	
Vitamin A	10%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	30%
Iron	0%
Vitamin D	25%
*Percentage Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	

A simple way to keep yourself from eating too much is to look at the serving size right at the top of the label and give yourself just that much for your meal. If you give yourself just the right amount of bread, and meat and veg and fruit and milk, for each meal, and keep yourself to three meals a day, you've made a good start.

If you want to do even better, keeping track of "food exchanges" will help you get a good balance of nutrition each day without going over on one kind of food while missing some of the others. (I didn't invent the exchanges. I just invented the game card on the next page.)

Food exchanges are simply established amounts of a particular food type. There are six types of food: bread, fruit, vegetables, fat, meat and milk:

- Bread (pasta, grains, potatoes, etc.),
- Fruit (apples, bananas, citrus, grapes, berries, etc.),
- Vegetables (especially root vegetables and beans, as most leafy veg is considered a "free food" meaning that you can have as much as you want),
- Fat (potato chips, some cheese, margarine, oils, shortening, etc.),
- Meat (mostly animal protein),
- Milk (including yogurt, low or non-fat cheese, etc.)

It's pretty easy to know, for the most part, what kind of food you have in front of you as most people know the difference between bread and milk, or a vegetable and some meat. Exchanges are a little different. Exchanges are based upon how much of three different things there are in each of these groups. These things are Fat, Carbohydrate, and Protein.

On the "Nutrition Facts" label, you can find how many grams of each of these is in the food you want to eat. The label that I've shown here is from a box of non-fat dry milk, but it will work with any label, even potato chips, or gourmet ice cream, or a candy bar.

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On the label (which we know is milk) we see that it has no fat, 12 grams of carbohydrate, and 8 grams of protein. Now, you get to use the pocket card:

<i>Daily Exchange Chart</i>						
Mark your intake with a wipe-able pen or pencil.						
You can exchange between meals, but stay in daily limits.						
<i>Meal</i>	Bread	Fruit	Veg	Fat	Meat	Milk
Breakfast						
Lunch						
Dinner						
Snack						
<i>Limits</i>	7	3	2	4	5	2
Over						

Grams Per Exchange						
	Bread	Fruit	Veg	Fat	Meat	Milk
Carb.	15	15	5	0	0	12
Fat	0	0	0	5	5	5
Protein	3	0	2	0	7	8

Check the "Nutrition Facts" panel and compare the grams with this chart to help determine your meal portion.

On the "Grams Per Exchange" side it says that one exchange of milk is 12 grams of carbohydrate, 5 grams of fat, and 8 grams of protein. So, the card says that one serving of this milk is one milk exchange. (The only difference is that this is non-fat milk, so there is no fat. On the card is an average low-fat milk exchange, which contains 5 grams of fat. Whole milk contains much more fat than that. Meat works the same way.)

Compare the grams in a Serving Size with the grams on the card to determine how many exchanges are in a serving. Sometimes there may be two or three exchanges in a single serving, and sometimes there may be more than one type of food in a product. Corned Beef Hash, for instance, has meat, bread (the potato) and fat in it, and you will have to adjust for each of those exchanges.

Now, we know that the milk we have in our hand is one exchange. Look on the "Daily Exchange Chart" side of the card. Which meal is it that you are about to have? If it's breakfast, you can have one exchange of milk. You can also have two exchanges of bread, one of fruit, and one of fat (an egg, presumably). What if it's lunch and you are just craving another glass of milk? You can exchange the milk in your nighttime snack for milk at lunch. It's why they call it an exchange. Suppose you have two fruits at breakfast? Just leave off having fruit for lunch or dinner. It's a game that you can play with yourself, or your spouse, or your friends, as you build better nutrition.

Now, you can photocopy this page and cut out the card. Fold it down the middle line, and get it laminated. With a Berol Transparency Pen, or a Sanford Vis-à-Vis Overhead Projection Pen, or some other wipe-able pen you can mark off each exchange as you go through the day.

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Some Things to Read:

Complete Diabetic Cookbook: The All-in-One Diabetic Cookbook by P.J. Palumbo and Joyce Daly Margie, New York : Penguin, 1989, ISBN 0452262526.

Diabetes for Dummies by Alan L. Rubin, New York, NY : Wiley Publishing, Inc., c2001, ISBN 076455154X.

Diabetes Cookbook for Dummies by Alan L. Rubin, with Fran Stach and Denise C. Sharf, Foster City, CA : IDG Books Worldwide, c2000 ISBN 0764552309

The New Glucose Revolution by Brand-Miller, Wolever, Foster-Powell, & Colagivri, Marlow & Company : New York, 2003, ISBN 1569245061.