

The Glycemic Index

What is the Glycemic Index of food?

The Glycemic Index (GI) is a scale that ranks carbohydrate-rich foods by how much they raise blood glucose levels compared to a standard food. The standard food is glucose or white bread.

Why should I eat foods with a low Glycemic Index?

Eating foods with a low Glycemic Index may help you to:

- Control your blood glucose level
- Control your cholesterol level
- Control your appetite
- Lower your risk of developing heart disease
- Lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes

Use these meal planning ideas to include the Glycemic Index as part of healthy eating.

- Enjoy vegetables, most fruits and low-fat milk products with your meals. These are carbohydrate-rich foods that, in general, have low glycemic index.
- Plan your meals with foods in the low and medium Glycemic Index starch choices on the list that follows.
- Try foods such as barley, bulgar, or lentils, which have a low Glycemic Index.
- Consult a registered dietitian for help with choosing low GI foods, adapting recipes, and other ways to incorporate low GI foods in your meal plan.

If I eat foods with a low Glycemic Index can I eat as much as I want?

No. Using the Glycemic Index to choose foods is only one part of healthy eating.

Healthy eating also means:

- Eating at regular times
- Choosing a variety of foods from all food groups
- Limiting sugars and sweets
- Reducing the amount of fat you eat
- Including foods high in fibre
- Limiting salt

Remember that checking your blood glucose before and 2 hours after a meal is the best way to know how your body handles the meal.



A lot of starchy foods have a high Glycemic Index (GI). Choose medium and low GI foods more often.

LOW GI (55 or less) * † Choose most often	MEDIUM GI (56-69) * † Choose more often	HIGH GI (70 or more) * † Choose less often
BREADS: 100% stone ground whole wheat Heavy mixed grain Pumpernickel	BREADS: Whole wheat Rye Pita	BREADS: White bread Kaiser roll Bagel, white
CEREAL: All Bran™ Bran Buds with Psyllium™ Oat Bran™	CEREAL: Grapenuts™ Puffed wheat Oatmeal Quick oats	CEREAL: Bran flakes Corn flakes Rice Krispies™
GRAINS: Barley Bulgar Pasta/noodles Parboiled or converted rice	GRAINS: Basmati rice Brown rice Couscous	GRAINS: Short-grain rice
OTHER: Sweet potato Yam Legumes Lentils Chickpeas Kidney beans Split peas Soy beans Baked beans	OTHER: Potato, new/white Sweet corn Popcorn Stoned Wheat Thins™ Ryvita™ (rye crisps) Black bean soup Green pea soup	OTHER: Potato, baking (Russet) French fries Pretzels Rice cakes Soda crackers

*expressed as a percentage of the value for glucose

† Canadian values where available

Adapted with permission from: Foster-Powell K, Holt SHA, Brand-Miller JC. International table of glycemic index and glycemic load values Am J Clin Nutr. 2002;76:5-56

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