

The Glycemic Index

This document reflects our
CPG
Clinical Practice Guidelines

Canadian
Diabetes
Association

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, 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, couscous, 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

One change I will make **now** is:

*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