

Diabetes - Glycaemic Index – Dietary Advice

This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet. If you need more detailed advice or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian

What is it?

The Glycaemic Index (GI) is a measure of how quickly carbohydrate containing foods are digested and therefore, how quickly they release glucose (sugar) into the bloodstream.

Foods that digest quickly have a high GI and can cause sharp increases in your blood glucose.

Foods that digest slowly have a low GI and will make your blood glucose rise slowly. These foods are sometimes called slow release carbohydrate.

How can I use the GI?

There is some good evidence that shows that choosing foods with a low GI may help control appetite and thus aid weight loss.

There is also good evidence that show that following a low GI diet can help you improve your diabetes control and cholesterol level.

Which foods and drinks contain carbohydrate?

- Starchy foods such as bread, pasta, chapattis, potatoes, yam, noodles, rice and cereals
- Vegetables, fruit and fruit juice
- Milk and yoghurt
- Lentils and pulses
- Sugar and other sweet foods
- Non-diet soft drinks
- Any foods made with flour such as pies, pastries, biscuits and cakes

What affects the GI of food?

Foods high in soluble fibre and uncooked foods have a lower GI. Foods high in protein and fat also have a lower GI.

What else do I need to consider?

The GI of foods is tested on the food when food is eating on its own. However it is not useful to use GI in isolation as we generally eat food in combination with other foods. For a low GI diet to be successful it needs to be incorporated into a balanced diet.

Adding protein, healthy oils, lentils, pulses and vegetables to your meal will lower the GI of the meal. If you need to lose weight, use oils sparingly.

Processing, refining and extending the cooking time of foods tends to make the carbohydrates more digestible and gives these foods a higher GI e.g. instant rice or over cooked spaghetti.

Portion size is also important.

The bigger your carbohydrate portion the higher your blood glucose is likely to go even if the food has a low GI. On the other hand a food may have a high GI but if you eat a small amount this may not affect your blood glucose too much.

Some low GI foods such as crisps, chocolate and cake have a low GI because they have a high fat content but these are not ideal foods to include on a regular basis.


How is GI measured?

Pure glucose has a value of 100 as it causes the greatest rise in blood sugar. All other foods are scored against this:

Low GI:	55 or less
Medium GI:	56 to 69
High GI:	70 or more

Over the page is a list of foods with low, medium and high GI values. Try to choose those with a low or medium GI more often and reduce how often you eat those with a high GI.

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Low GI foods (under 55):	High GI foods (70 and over):
<p>Breads Multi-grain/granary /seeded bread, tortillas</p> <p>Breakfast cereals All Bran, Original Special K, porridge, rice bran</p> <p>Grains Barley, pasta, noodles, bulger, semolina, long grained basmati rice, new potato</p> <p>Legumes All beans (e.g. kidney, soya, baked beans, peas, lentils)</p> <p>All vegetables and salads</p> <p>Starchy vegetables New potato, Sweet potato, yam, parsnip</p> <p>Fruit Cherries, grapefruit, peach, apricots, apple, pear, plums, orange</p> <p>Dairy Skimmed milk, plain yoghurt</p>	<p>Breads Bagels, French baguette</p> <p>Breakfast cereals Cornflakes, Puffed Wheat Crispix, Cheerios, Rice Krispies, Muesli</p> <p>Grains Instant rice, brown rice, jasmine rice</p> <p>Starchy vegetables Baked potato, mashed potato, Jacket potato</p> <p>Fruit Ripe bananas, watermelon</p> <p>Other Lucozade, Morning Coffee, Rice cakes, Waffles, Water biscuits, sugar, honey, syrup</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Here are some examples of low GI meals and suggested portions:</p> <p>Breakfast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A handful of chopped fruits and unsalted nuts into a small low-fat natural yogurt • 1-2 slices multigrain bread with vegetable spread and ham or cheese • Scrambled eggs on 1-2 slices wholemeal toast <p>Lunch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small pitta bread with salad and lean meat or tuna fish (you can add light mayonnaise) • 3-6 new potatoes with chilli corn carne a sprinkle of grated cheese and salad • Lentil or bean soup served with 1-2 slices of multigrain bread <p>Dinner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium portion spaghetti Bolognese with a green salad • Stir-fried sliced chicken breast with mixed, chopped vegetables and 100-130g cooked wild rice • Grilled lean steak with 3-6 new potatoes, peas and mushrooms • Spicy lentil and vegetable curry with 100-130g basmati rice.
<p style="text-align: center;">Medium GI foods (56 - 69):</p> <p>Breads Chapatis, crumpets, White, wholemeal and pitta breads</p> <p>Breakfast cereals Instant porridge, Shredded Wheat, Weetabix</p> <p>Grains Couscous, Long-grain rice, basmati rice, wild-rice, couscous</p> <p>Starchy vegetables Beetroot, sweetcorn</p> <p>Fruit Banana, pineapple, mango, raisins, sultanas</p> <p>Dairy Sweetened milk, sweetened, flavoured yoghurt</p> <p>Other Muesli bars, Plain popcorn, Rich tea, digestives, Ryvita</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Information compiled from The New Glucose Revolution by J Brand- Miller et al, 2002</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	