

The glycemic index

Choosing the right amount and type of carbohydrate foods can help you manage your blood glucose levels. The glycemic index is one tool to help you make the best choices of foods that contain carbohydrate.

Carbohydrate foods are the main source of energy for your body. Foods high in carbohydrate include bread, pasta, rice, grains, cereals, fruits, starchy vegetables, legumes, milk and yoghurt. Your body breaks down carbohydrate from these foods into glucose, which then enters your bloodstream.



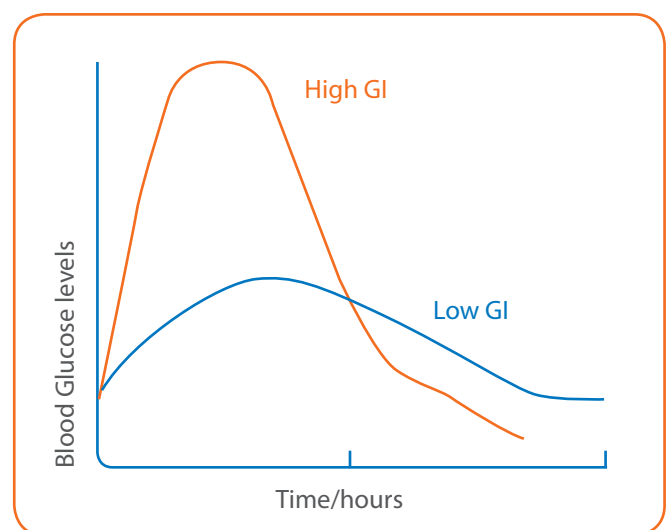
To keep blood glucose levels within your target range, it's important to consider the amount and then the type of carbohydrate foods you eat and how these are spread across the day.

What is the glycemic index?

The glycemic index (GI) ranks how slowly or quickly carbohydrate foods affect blood glucose levels.

High-GI carbohydrate foods break down into glucose quickly, which means a higher and faster rise in blood glucose levels after eating.

Low-GI carbohydrate foods break down into glucose slowly, over a longer period of time. Compared with high-GI foods, they result in a smaller and slower rise in blood glucose levels after eating.



Acknowledgement www.glycemicindex.com

Helpline 1300 136 588

ndss.com.au

What are the benefits of a low-GI eating plan?

Research has shown that people with diabetes can improve their blood glucose levels after meals and lower average blood glucose levels (HbA1c) by including lower GI carbohydrate foods as part of a healthy eating plan.

Low-GI diets have also been shown to:

- » reduce insulin resistance
- » help with weight management
- » improve blood cholesterol levels.

These factors are also important for managing diabetes and reducing the risk of long-term diabetes-related complications.

Are all low-GI foods healthy?

There are some foods with a low GI that are not healthy everyday food choices, such as potato chips, chocolate and ice cream. There are also some foods with a high GI that are healthy everyday food choices, such as watermelon, some types of brown rice, and some high-fibre breakfast cereals.

When choosing low-GI foods, you should also consider the overall nutritional value of the food including the amount of kilojoules, saturated fat, salt (sodium) and fibre.

It's important to keep in mind that the GI is just one tool to help you manage your diabetes. You also need to consider the total amount of carbohydrate in the foods that you eat throughout the day.

Examples of lower GI foods

Breads	Low-GI varieties include dense grainy/seeded breads, fruit loaf, pumpernickel, authentic sourdough, white corn tortillas. Look for breads with the GI symbol.
Breakfast cereals	Low-GI varieties include traditional rolled oats or steel-cut oats, wheat, rice or oat bran, and natural muesli. Look for breads with the GI symbol.
Grains	Pasta (most types), fresh rice noodles, soba noodles, mung bean (bean thread noodles), Basmati rice, Doongara™ rice, quinoa, barley, bulgur (cracked wheat), buckwheat, semolina, pearl (Israeli) couscous, freekeh.
Legumes	Other than broad beans, all dried and canned legumes have a low GI, including baked beans, kidney beans, soy beans, bean mix, cannellini, haricot, butter beans brown/green/red lentils, split peas, black eyed peas, and chickpeas.
Vegetables	Lower GI vegetables include taro, yam, parsnips, sweet corn, and orange sweet potatoes. Look for starchy vegetables with the GI symbol.
Dairy foods	Milk, soy milk, yoghurt and custard naturally have a lower GI. Look for lower-fat varieties.
Biscuits/crackers	Lower GI varieties include grainy/seeded crackers and biscuits with oats and dried fruit. Look for varieties with the GI symbol.
Fruit	Most fruits have a lower GI, including apples, bananas, pears, oranges, peaches, fresh/dried/canned apricots, plums, mangoes, nectarines, grapes, kiwifruit, and prunes.



Tips for eating low GI

- Try to include a nutritious low GI food at each meal.
- Swap higher GI carbohydrate foods for lower GI options. A dietitian can help you with this.
- Replace some of the high GI foods in a meal with a low GI option to lower the overall GI of the meal.
- Look for products with the GI symbol logo. This indicates that the food has been tested at an accredited laboratory and meets strict nutrient criteria that are in line with the Dietary Guidelines for Australians. Note, not all foods with a low GI will have the GI symbol logo.



More information

For more information about the glycemic index, visit www.glycemicindex.com and www.gisymbol.com

To find an accredited practising dietitian, contact the Dietitians Association of Australia on 1800 812 942 or visit www.daa.asn.au

The glycemic index is one tool to help you make the best choices of foods that contain carbohydrate.

The NDSS and you

The NDSS provides a range of services to help you manage your diabetes. These include our Infoline and website for advice on diabetes management, NDSS products and a range of support programs to help you learn more about managing your diabetes.

Published June 2016