

## Fact Sheet

Central Adelaide Local Health Network  
Diabetes Education Service

# Glycaemic index

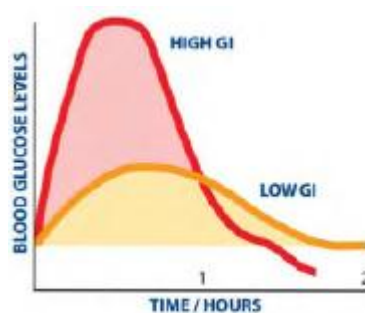
### What is the Glycaemic Index (GI)?

The Glycaemic Index (GI) is a ranking of carbohydrate foods on a scale of 0-100 telling us whether a food will raise blood glucose levels a lot, moderately, or just a little.

Nutritious carbohydrate foods like wholegrain cereals and breads, starchy vegetables (potato, sweet potato and corn), legumes, fruit, milk and yoghurt are recommended in a healthy diet.

### How is GI measured?

Carbohydrate foods that break down **slowly** and release glucose gradually into the blood stream have a **low GI**. Carbohydrate foods that break down **quickly** produce a faster and higher rise in blood glucose levels and have a **high GI**.



### Why is GI important?

For people with diabetes, **high GI** foods may result in a **higher** rise in blood glucose levels after a meal. **Low GI** foods may result in a **lower** rise in blood glucose levels after a meal.

**Low GI** foods can also promote weight loss by making you feel fuller so you eat less.

Your choice of food should not **only** be based on its GI.

Aim to also consider:

- > The amount of food you are eating.
- > The type and amount of fat in food (e.g. potato chips and chocolate have a low GI but are high in fat so are not the best choice).
- > Fibre: A high fibre intake promotes good gut health.
- > Nutrients: Vitamins and minerals are essential for good health. Eating a range of foods, such as wholegrain breads and cereals, fruit and vegetables, which are high in fibre will provide you with these.



## Tips on how to lower the GI of your meal

- > Try to include at least one low GI food at each meal.
- > Add foods to your meal that are high in soluble fibre e.g. baked beans, lentils, kidney beans, vegetables and high fibre whole grain breads and cereals.
- > Add lemon juice or vinegar as a dressing as this will increase the acidity which will assist in lowering the GI of that meal.
- > After potato and rice are cooked allow them to cool before eating. When they are cool they have a lower GI e.g. potato or rice salad.
- > Including a serve of protein (lean meat, fish, chicken, eggs) with your meal can assist in lowering the GI of the meal.

## Glycaemic Load

Glycaemic Load (GL) takes into account the GI value and the quantity of the carbohydrate you eat. A higher glycaemic load will raise blood glucose levels.

By choosing low GI options you will automatically be choosing the food with the lower GL. However eating a large amount of a low GI food can raise blood glucose levels.

## The GI symbol

Some food packages have a GI symbol (as shown) on the label. A product that displays the GI symbol has been tested at an accredited laboratory for its glycaemic index and has a low GI. The actual GI value will appear near the nutrition information panel. Foods can only display the GI symbol if they have a low glycaemic index and meet other nutritional criteria including lower in energy (calories/kilojoules), fat, saturated fat and sodium, and where appropriate, higher in fibre and calcium.



A food company that displays the GI symbol on their product has paid for the symbol. Not all food companies will be involved in this program. Some foods that do not have the GI symbol may still have a low GI. However they may not be an all-round healthy choice because they do not meet the nutritional criteria.

	Low GI (55 or less)	Moderate GI (56-69)	High GI (70 or more)
<b>Breakfast Cereals</b>	Rice bran, Oat Bran, All-Bran, Guardian, traditional rolled oats, Sustain, Goodness Superfoods: Digestive 1 <sup>st</sup> , Protein 1 <sup>st</sup> , Heart 1 <sup>st</sup>	Weet-Bix, Vita Brits, Just Right, Mini Wheats (plain), Sultana Bran, instant porridge, Natural Muesli, Special K Original**	Puffed wheat, Rice Bubbles**, Bran Flakes, Corn Flakes**, Mini Wheats (fruit filled), Shredded Wheat
<b>Breads &amp; Grains</b>	Dense whole grain breads, most fruit loaves, traditional sourdough **, pearl barley, cracked wheat (Bulgur), buckwheat, semolina, quinoa, pasta/spaghetti, rice noodles, instant noodles, Doongara Clever Rice Low GI White SunRice, Long grain rice (Mahatma), Low GI Long Grain Rice (Brown) SunRice	Couscous, polenta, rye bread, wholemeal bread, bagel, pita bread, crumpet, Basmati rice, Arborio rice, wild rice	White bread**, English muffin, baguette, jasmine rice, Calrose Rice
<b>Vegetables</b>	Taro, Carisma potatoes, Nadine potatoes	Sweet potato, sweet corn	Most other potatoes, mashed potato
<b>Legumes &amp; Pulses</b>	Lentils, kidney beans, split peas, chick peas, baked beans		Broad Beans
<b>Biscuits</b>	Oatmeal biscuits, Arnotts Snack Right, Ryvita with Pumpkin Seeds & Oats, Ryvita Sunflower Seeds & Oats, Vita-Weat 9 Grain	Digestive biscuits, Shredded Wheatmeal, Milk Arrowroot biscuits	Water crackers, Sao*, rice crackers, rice cakes, corn thins, Morning coffee biscuits
<b>Snack foods</b>			Pretzels**, plain pop corn
<b>Fruit</b>	Grapefruit, pears, apricots, apples, plums, peaches, oranges, grapes, banana, mango, kiwi fruit, mandarins, nectarines, prunes, dates, dried apricots, dried apples, drained tinned fruit in natural juice	Sultanas, raisins, pineapple, cherries, rockmelon, dried figs, fresh lychee, fresh paw paw	Watermelon
<b>Dairy &amp; Alternatives</b>	Yoghurt, milk, soy milk, custard, Fruche, ice cream* (choose low fat varieties)		Rice milk (low in calcium), Oat milk
<b>Spreads</b>	100% fruit jam	Honey	
<b>Sugars ***</b>	Fructose, Logicane Sugar	All other table sugar (sucrose)	Malt (maltose), glucose, Jelly beans
<b>Drinks***</b>	100% fruit juices**		Sports drinks*** e.g. Gatorade, Lucozade

- \* These are foods high in saturated fat. Use them occasionally.  
 \*\* These foods are low in fibre. Use them occasionally.  
 \*\*\* Limit sugars as part of a healthy diet.

#### References:

Brand-Miller J, Foster-Powell K. (annual edition): *The Low GI Diet Shopper's Guide'*

[www.gisymbol.com](http://www.gisymbol.com)

[www.glycemicindex.com](http://www.glycemicindex.com)

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The information contained within this publication does not constitute medical advice, and is for general information only. Readers should always seek independent, professional advice where appropriate

## For more information

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