

# GI number of foods

The **Glycemic Index (GI)** was developed to help make better food choices. The idea of the glycemic index is to help people choose food that will keep their blood sugar levels more steady instead of allowing high peaks after eating certain types of foods (carbohydrates) that are absorbed quickly and cause the blood sugars to rise rapidly.

The glycemic index was initially developed in the University of Toronto in Canada in the early 1980s as a result of research into what food is best for diabetics. However, in recent years it has become a popular and handy tool for people wanting to keep their weight down and prevent diseases.

## Short term impact of high GI foods

It is important to have foods with a low glycemic number in the diet. The GI index is a measure of the impact of food on your blood sugar. Foods with a high GI will raise your body's blood sugar levels quickly; by contrast foods with a low GI will raise them more slowly and over a longer period.

Eating lots of high GI foods has two disadvantages. Firstly, the rush of energy given by high GI foods does not last and is soon followed by an energy lull. So you get hungry and want to eat more. Secondly, after eating high GI foods you will have a lot of readily available energy in your blood. Your body will use this energy first rather than other stores of energy like body fat. This makes it harder to lose weight. Aim for foods that have a low or moderate GI count, such as oats, pulses and wholemeal varieties of bread and rice.

## Glycemic Index Categories

The glycemic index system categorises each food with an index number ranging from 1 to 100. Pure glucose is considered to have a glycemic index of 100. The three GI levels are high, moderate and low. A GI level greater than 70 is classified as high; a GI level between 56 to 69 is classified as moderate while a level less than 55 is classified as low.

## Processed Foods Have Higher GI Values

The more processed a food, the higher its GI value will be. Foods made with white flour including white varieties of bread, pasta and rice have a high glycemic index. Unprocessed foods have a lower glycemic index. Hence wholemeal or brown versions of bread, pasta and rice have a lower glycemic index. High fibre foods have a lower GI level. Adding more fresh fruit and veg and fresh unprocessed meat will mean you have more low GI foods in your diet.

## GI numbers of foods.

Choose lots of low GI carbohydrates as your staples during the week. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables from this group but think of pasta and rice as side orders (1/4 plate), rather than the main food on your plate. Examples of **low GI foods** include apples, beans (without sauce), blueberries, broccoli, cabbage, cherries, chickpeas, citrus-fruits, grapes, hummus, lentils, milk (use-skimmed-or-low-fat), muesli (unsweetened), mushrooms (not fried), noodles, oat-bran, onions, pasta (wholemeal), peas, peaches, pears, peppers, porridge, raspberries, rhubarb, strawberries, tomatoes.

**Medium GI foods** can be enjoyed moderately. Some however are high in saturated fat and calories such as chocolate and therefore warrant further restrictions when you're slimming. Examples of medium GI foods are boiled potatoes, chocolate, couscous, pineapple and 100% wholegrain bread.

**High GI foods** are foods you should aim to eat less often. They tend to be quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, triggering the pancreas to release lots of insulin and leave you feeling hungry again soon after you've eaten. There are some you wouldn't expect to have a high GI level including watermelon, carrots and parsnips. Examples of high GI foods include bagels, biscuits, bread(brown-and-white-sliced), breakfast-cereals(refined), carrots, cereal-bars, croissants, dates, doughnuts, jelly-beans, ketchup, melon, parsnips, popcorn, potatoes (mashed-and-baked), pretzels, rice (white), rice-cakes, soft-drinks (regular) and watermelon.

## How can low GI foods help weight loss?

By eating meals that have a low GI you will feel less hungry. This means that rather than controlling your cravings for food by will-power alone, you are controlling them by satisfying your body. By eating lower GI foods, your desire to snack or over eat will be greatly reduced.

## Health Benefits and Weight Loss from Low GI Foods

A diet of lower GI foods reduces the chance of developing type 2 diabetes. It lowers cholesterol levels. It reduces the chances of developing cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure (hypertension), stroke, kidney disease and eye problems.

## Don't eat carbohydrates alone

Carbohydrates should never be eaten alone, but should be combined with proteins and good fats (non-saturated fats) such as olive oil. Combining a food with a high GI number with a protein and good fat lowers the GI number of a meal. For example, when eating a carbohydrate like an apple as a snack, it is a good idea to add a protein food such as a slice of cheese or a boiled egg, along with some good fat. Balance and variety is the key with diet. Although eating low GI foods has many health benefits, a diet that's totally made up of low GI foods can lead to inadequate nutrition. An extreme low carbohydrate diet is dangerous as it can lead to dangerous weight loss. A healthier low carbohydrate diet is one that has about 90 calories a day.

## Free Heart Screening

If you are worried that you or a loved one are at increased risk of heart disease, you can book in for a free check-up on our regular heart screening days. The check-up takes about half an hour. Our pharmacist will check your blood pressure and cholesterol and our diabetic nurse will test you for diabetes. We can also calculate your Body Mass Index if you so wish. We will calculate your risk of heart disease. If you already suffer from high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes or a heart condition, you can book in on the day to get your condition assessed or to ask questions about your condition or your medication regime. Our next heart screening day on Wednesday March 9<sup>th</sup> is now booked out. However, we are now taking names for the following heart screening day in the end of March. Call us at 04493 34591 to book your place.

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