

# Understanding Glycemic Index

**Choosing foods with a low glycemic index can help improve your blood fats and your blood sugar levels after eating.**

## What is Glycemic Index?

Glycemic index or “GI” is a measure of how fast carbohydrate-containing foods raise your blood sugar level after eating.

The GI ranks foods on a scale from 0 to 100.

When you eat foods with a high GI (from 70 to 100) they cause a quicker rise in your blood sugar level compared to foods with a lower GI.

The GI ranges for foods containing carbohydrates		
Low GI Foods	0 to 55	Choose more often
Medium GI Foods	56 to 69	
High GI Foods	70 to 100	

**Important:** This is not a full list of brands or products. The University Health Network does not recommend one brand over another and is not responsible for any products listed. Please contact each company directly to find out more about their products.



## Scientific research shows that choosing low GI foods can help:

- ✓ Promote better control of blood sugar
- ✓ Improve your blood fat levels
- ✓ Control appetite
- ✓ Lower your chances of developing heart disease
- ✓ Lower your chances of developing Type 2 diabetes

## What affects the GI of a food?

Many factors can affect the GI of a food, including:

- Processing of the food
- Cooking time
- Type of fibre in the food

## How do I make healthy choices with the GI?

Choosing low GI foods offers potential health benefits. Healthy eating also includes considering other aspects of your diet such as:

- Portion size (total amount of carbohydrate)
- The amount of total calories, fibre, sodium and added sugars
- The amount and type of fats

For more information about the glycemic index, you can visit:

- [www.glycemicindex.com](http://www.glycemicindex.com) (University of Sydney)
- <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Carbohydrate-and-Sugar/Getting-to-Know-the-Glycemic-Index.aspx> (UnlockFood.ca)
- <https://guidelines.diabetes.ca/docs/patient-resources/glycemic-index-food-guide.pdf> (Diabetes Canada)



## Foods and their GI values

Type of food	Low (0 to 55)	Medium (56 to 69)	High (70 to 100)
<b>bread products</b>	Chapatti (52) Corn Tortilla (46) Wholegrain English muffin (45)	Bagel, white (69) Wheat roti (62)	White bread (75) Whole grain /whole wheat bread (74) Whole grain baguette (79) Wonder™, enriched white bread (73) Unleavened bread (70)
<b>breakfast cereals</b>	All-Bran™ (51) Rolled oats (49)	Bran Flakes (65) Granola (63-70) Millet porridge (67) Muesli (66) Shredded Wheat (67) Steel cut oats (57)	Congee (78) Cornflakes (80) Granola (63-70) Instant oats (79) Maize meal porridge (74) Weetabix (75)
<b>grains and pasta</b>	Barley (32) Buckwheat (45) Noodles – Instant noodles (50) Mungbean (39) Rice noodles (53) Udon noodles (55)  Pasta – cooked <i>al dente</i> Fettucine, egg (40) Fusilli, pasta (55) Lasagna sheets (53) Linguini (52) Spaghetti, white (44) Spaghetti, WW (48)  Quinoa, cooked (53)	Buckwheat noodle (59) Couscous (65) Rice – Basmati, white (57) Brown (66) Long grain (69)	Rice – Calrose (83) Congee (78) Glutinous (93) Instant (74) Sushi rice (85) Jasmine (99) Medium grain (75) Sticky rice (75) White (72)  Brown rice Pasta (92)

Type of food	Low (0 to 55)	Medium (56 to 69)	High (70 to 100)
<b>*vegetables</b>	Carrots (39) Green Peas (51) Parsnips (52)		
<b>starchy vegetables</b>	Plantain (55) Sweet corn (52) Taro, boiled (53) Yam (54)	Potato – French fries (63) Irish, boiled (68) Sweet potato (63)  Pumpkin (64)	Cassava (94) Potato – Instant, Mashed (80) Mashed (76) New (70) Red skin boiled (89) Russet, Burbank (77) White boiled (78) White baked (86)  Jamaican Yam – Sweet Yam (81) White Yam (72)
<b>fruits</b>	Apple (39) Apricots, fresh (34) Apricots, dried (31) Dates, dried (42) Mango (51) Nectarines (43) Orange (40) Peaches, canned (43) Prunes, pitted (29) Strawberries (40)	Banana (62) Breadfruit, raw (62) Cantaloupe (67) Cherries, raw (63) Figs, dried (61) Grapes, black (59) Kiwi (58) Pineapple (59) Raisins (64) Sultanas (57)	Lychee, canned (79) Watermelon (76)
<b>milk and alternatives</b>	Chocolate milk (43) Full fat milk (34) Skim milk (32) Soy milk – Chocolate (40) Plain (15) Vanilla (28) Yogurt – Plain (19) Fruit (41)		Rice milk (86)

Type of food	Low (0 to 55)	Medium (56 to 69)	High (70 to 100)
<b>snacks and other products</b>	Agave (13) Cashew nuts (25) Hummus (6) Ice-cream (31) Maple syrup (54)	Digestive Cookie (59) Popcorn (58) Ryvita™ (69) Table sugar (65) Water Cracker (63)	Honey (87) Rice crackers/crisps (87)
<b>legumes</b>	Chickpeas (36) Black-eyed beans (40) Butterbeans (36) Haricot beans (31) Kidney beans (29) Lentils (29) Marrowfat peas (47) Soya beans (15) White beans (14)		

References:

Wolever, T. M., Gibbs, A. L., Mehling, C., Chiasson, J. L., Connelly, P. W., Josse, R. G., ... & Ryan, E. A. (2008). The Canadian Trial of Carbohydrates in Diabetes (CCD), a 1-y controlled trial of low-glycemic-index dietary carbohydrate in type 2 diabetes: no effect on glycosylated hemoglobin but reduction in C-reactive protein. *The American journal of clinical nutrition*, 87(1), 114-125.

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\*Note: Except for the vegetables listed in the chart, most vegetables have little or no carbohydrates and so they do not have a GI value.

**Important:** This pamphlet is intended to be used with a Registered Dietitian who can assess your individual nutritional needs. Although low glycemic foods are a healthier choice, some are higher in carbohydrates than others. Ask your Registered Dietitian about the foods you eat most often and to help with understanding portion sizes.

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