

## Patient information

# The Glycaemic Index

Therapies Department

### What is the Glycaemic Index?

The Glycaemic Index (GI) is a scale of how quickly carbohydrate foods raise blood glucose levels. Foods are ranked from high to low. A high GI food raises blood glucose levels quickly, whereas medium and low GI foods raise blood glucose levels more slowly. In general, low GI foods are better for good blood glucose control.

### Many factors affect the GI of foods, for example:

- How the food is prepared or cooked.
- Where it is grown.
- How ripe it is (e.g. fruit).
- How much of the food is eaten.
- What the food is eaten with.

### How do I use GI?

It is best to continue to eat a varied and nutritionally balanced diet, but to incorporate the GI values.

Try to include a low GI food with every meal as this will reduce the GI of the whole meal.

### For example:

- A jacket potato has a high GI, but when combined with a low GI filling such as baked beans, the GI is less.
- A high GI breakfast cereal such as bran flakes can be combined with low fat milk to make a healthy, medium GI breakfast.

It is important to remember, however, that GI should not be used alone to determine how healthy a food is. Some foods, such as chocolate and many cakes have a low GI but are not recommended as a regular part of a healthy diet. The high fat content in these foods lowers the GI. **These foods are also not the best choice for treating low blood glucose levels as they do not work quickly enough.**

## Why can low GI foods be good for me?

There are many advantages to incorporating more low GI foods in to your diet:

- They raise blood glucose levels more slowly and can help improve your overall blood glucose control.
- They can help you feel fuller for longer and, if combined with healthy eating, can aid weight loss.
- They can help to improve cholesterol levels which reduces the risk of heart disease.

## Which foods should I choose?

The following table gives a guide to the GI of some carbohydrate foods.

	<b>Low GI</b>	<b>Medium GI</b>	<b>High GI</b>
Cereals	All-Bran, no added sugar muesli, Special K, oat bran, rolled oats, porridge, Sultana Bran, Fruit and Fibre, oat and wheat flakes	Shredded Wheat, Shreddies, Cheerios, grapenuts	Cornflakes, Honey nut Cornflakes, Frosted flakes, Coco Pops, Puffed wheat, Rice Krispies, Weetabix
Breads, Crackers	Granary/multigrain bread, soya and linseed bread, rye bread, chapattis, sourdough bread, wheat/corn tortilla wrap	Wholemeal bread, pitta bread, fibre enriched white bread, english muffin, crumpets, Ryvita, oat cakes	white bread, baguette, bagel, brown bread, water crackers, rice cakes, puffed crisp bread
Pasta, Rice, Potatoes	Yams, sweet potatoes, noodles (all types), most types of pasta, long grain white rice	New potatoes, boiled potatoes, gnocchi, basmati rice, wild rice, vermicelli,	Jacket potato, mashed potato, instant mashed potato, chips*, instant white rice, short grain white rice.
Dairy Products	Milk, Yoghurt, probiotic drinks, custard, full-fat ice cream*	Low-fat ice cream	
Fruit	Cherries, apples, plums, grapefruit, peaches (canned and fresh), pears, dried apricots, grapes, kiwi fruit, oranges, prunes strawberries, banana	Cantaloupe melon, pineapple, apricots (canned), mango, sultanas, raisins, papaya, figs	Watermelon, dates, lychees

Veg	Carrots, peas, sweetcorn, salad veg, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, mushrooms, chillies, green beans, peppers, onions, plantain	Beetroot	Pumpkin, parsnips, swede, broad beans
Beans, Pulses, Grains	Baked beans, butter beans, black eyed beans, chick peas, haricot beans, kidney beans, lentils, soya beans, pearl barley, buckwheat, bulgur wheat, quinoa	Couscous, cornmeal, millet,	Tapioca
Sweets and Savoury Snacks	Most chocolate*, plain popcorn, nuts*, crisps*, taco shells	Mars Bar*	Pretzels, corn chips, sweets
Biscuits, Cakes, pastries	Fruit loaf, malt loaf, sponge cake*, banana cake*	Muffins, flapjack*, digestive biscuits, tea biscuits, arrowroot biscuits, muesli bar*, Nutri-grain bar, oat biscuits, croissant*, Danish pastry*	Donuts, scones, morning coffee biscuits
Drinks	Soya milk, sugar-free drinks, orange juice, grapefruit juice, pineapple juice (small glass), smoothies, meal replacement drinks	Sports drinks, normal fizzy drinks	Lucozade, glucose drinks
Misc.	Coconut, Coconut milk, fructose, lactose, jam, Nutella, humus	Sucrose (sugar), honey	Glucose, maple syrup.

\* These foods are high in fat, therefore should not be eaten too frequently.

## **Meal suggestions**

### **❖ Breakfast**

- Porridge made with low fat milk with fresh or dried fruit.
- Two slices of granary toast with low-fat spread and reduced sugar jam or marmalade.
- Grilled bacon, poached egg and grilled tomato with two slices of rye bread.
- Low calorie yoghurt with fruit.

### **❖ Lunch**

- Jacket potato with baked beans and salad.
- Two small granary rolls with cold meat/egg/low fat cheese and salad filling.
- Lentil soup.
- Tuna salad with pasta or quinoa and reduced fat dressing.
- Fresh fruit or low calorie yoghurt for dessert.

### **❖ Evening meal**

- Prawn/chicken/vegetable stir fry with noodles.
- Casserole with added beans/pulses.
- Grilled/roasted meat with new potatoes and steamed vegetables.
- Turkey fajitas with wheat tortillas.
- Stewed fruit with low fat/low sugar custard or fresh fruit salad with one scoop low fat ice cream for dessert.

### **❖ Snacks**

- Slice of malt loaf.
- Plain popcorn.
- Oatcakes with reduced fat cottage cheese.
- Handful dried fruit/piece of fresh fruit.
- Sliced pitta bread with reduced fat humus.

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## **Further information**

**Diabetes Dietitians Royal Liverpool University Hospital:**

**Tel: 0151 706 3050**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3050**

**Diabetes UK**

**10 Parkway, London NW1 7AA**

**Email: [info@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:info@diabetes.org.uk)**

**Diabetes UK Careline: 0845 120 2960 (operates a translation service)**  
**Monday - Friday between 9am and 5pm**  
**Recorded information on diabetes-related topics is available on this number 24 hours a day.**

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