Living F.R.E.E. Lab

The Glycemic Index Guide

Glycemic Index Categories

GREEN = **LOW GI**
(55 or less)
Choose MOST Often

YELLOW = **MEDIUM GI**
(56 to 69)
Choose SOMETIMES

RED = **HIGH GI**
(70 or more)
Choose LEAST Often

Foods in the high GI category can be swapped with foods in the medium and/or low GI category.

Benefits of a low GI diet

- Decrease risk of type 2 diabetes.
- Help manage your blood sugar.
- Decrease risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Feel full longer.

Meal planning ideas

- Cook your pasta al dente (firm). Check your pasta package instructions for cooking time.
- Make foods and drinks such as fruits, and milk or alternatives part of your meal. These foods often have a low GI.
- Try lower GI grains, such as barley and bulgur.
- Swap half of your higher GI starch food serving with beans, lentils or chickpeas. For example, instead of having 1 cup of cooked short grain rice, have ½ cup of cooked rice mixed with ½ cup of black beans.

The **glycemic index (GI)** is a scale that ranks a carbohydrate-containing food or drink by how fast it raises blood sugar levels after a set amount is eaten. Foods with a high GI tend to increase blood sugar faster than foods with a low GI.

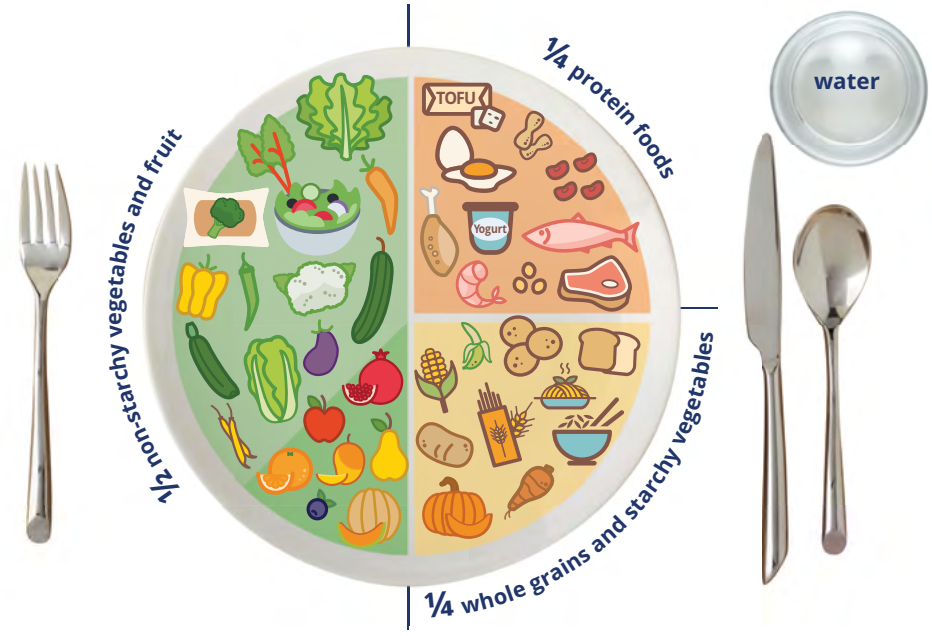
On top of the type of carbohydrate you choose, the quantity or serving size also has a role to play in managing your blood sugar. Even low GI foods need to be eaten in a specific amount or serving size to avoid a high blood sugar response.

The GI of the food can change based on the serving size eaten, cooking method and by combining the food with other ingredients in a meal or snack. By pairing a high GI food with a combination of non-starchy vegetables, lean protein and healthy fats at each meal or snack, you can reduce the overall glycemic response.

While this is a tool to help people living with diabetes better understand blood sugar changes in response to foods eaten, every body is different. You may find that some high GI foods do not impact your blood sugar as much while some low GI foods do!

The Balanced Plate Method

Using a standard dinner plate, follow this model for a balanced meal.



Some carbohydrate-containing foods and drinks have so little carbohydrate that they do not have a GI value. This means that they can be included as part of a healthy diet with little to no impact on blood sugar. Examples include animal based proteins, many vegetables, herbs, spices, lemons and limes. These foods are not included in the lists below but can be included in a balanced meal or snack.

Diabetes Canada recommends choosing lower GI foods and drinks more often to help control blood sugar. If possible, work with a Registered Dietitian to add foods and drinks to your lists, create action plans that include choosing lower GI foods, adapt your favourite recipes, and find ways to swap/substitute low GI foods into your meal plan.

Checking your blood sugar before, and 2 hours after a meal is the best way to know how your body handles certain foods and drinks.

Items marked with an * are foods to be enjoyed occasionally. Some items are ranked based on the average of multiple inputs from the International Tables of Glycemic Index & Glycemic Load. Reference provided below.

GRAINS & STARCHES

Low Glycemic Index (55 or less) Choose MOST Often	Medium Glycemic Index (56 to 69) Choose LESS Often	High Glycemic Index (70 or more) Choose LEAST Often
Breads:	**Breads:**	**Breads:**
English Muffin (Whole Wheat, Multigrain)	Chapati (White, Whole Wheat)	Bread, Bagel, Baguette (White, Whole Wheat)
Dosa (Foxtail Millet + Dhal)	Gluten-free Bread (Sourdough, Buckwheat, Quinoa, Oat, Pulse)	Dosa (Rice Flour, Finger Millet + Dhal)
Idli (Brown rice + Dhal)	Milk Bread	English Muffin (White)
Flaxseed/Linseed Bread	Oat Bread	Gluten-free Bread (White, Rice, Corn)
Mixed Grain Heavy Breads	Paratha	Idli (White rice + Dhal)
Multigrain, Seeded Bread	Pita Bread (White, Whole Wheat)	Matzo
Pumpernickel Bread	Spelt Bread	Naan (White, Whole Wheat)
Sprouted Grain Bread	Sourdough (Whole Wheat, Rye)	Rice Bread
Tortilla (Whole Wheat, White, Corn)	Roti (White, Whole Wheat)	Rice Cakes
Cereal:	Rye Bread (Light, Dark, Whole Grain)	Sourdough (White)
All-Bran™ Cereal	Whole Grain Whole Wheat Bread	**Cereal:**
All-Bran Buds™ With Psyllium Cereal	**Cereal:**	Cheerios™ Cereal
Red River Cereal	All-Bran Flakes™ Cereal	Corn Flakes™ Cereal
Oats (Steel Cut)	Cornmeal porridge	Cream of Wheat™ (Instant)
Oat Bran™	Cream of Wheat™ (Regular)	Puffed Wheat Cereal
Grains:	Granola	Rice Krispies™ Cereal
Adlay, Job's Tears, Chinese Barley (Boiled, Flaked)	Muesli	Shredded Wheat™
Barley	Oats (Large Flake, Rolled, Old Fashioned)	Special K™ Cereal
Buckwheat	Oats (Quick)	Oats (Instant)
Bulgur	Raisin Bran™	**Grains:**
Chickpea flour	**Grains:**	Millet (Finger, Pearl)
Egg Noodles	Amaranth	Ramen (Instant)
Kamut	Cornmeal	Rice (Instant)
Mung Bean Noodles	Couscous (Regular, Whole Wheat)	Rice (Jasmine)
Pasta (Wheat - Al Dente, Firm)	Gluten Free Pasta	Rice (Sticky, Sushi, Short Grain)
Pulse Flours	Millet (Foxtail, Little, Kodo, Proso, Barnyard)	Rice Porridge (Congee)
Quinoa	Ramen Noodles (Fresh, Buckwheat, Whole Wheat)	Sorghum
Rice (Brown)	Rice (Basmati)	
Rice (Wild)	Rice (Parboiled)	
	Rice (Long Grain)	
	Rice Noodles	
	Soba (Buckwheat) Noodles	
	Spelt	
	Tapioca	
	Teff	
	Udon Noodles	

GRAINS & STARCHES (continued)

Low Glycemic Index (55 or less) Choose MOST Often	Medium Glycemic Index (56 to 69) Choose LESS Often	High Glycemic Index (70 or more) Choose LEAST Often
Other:	**Other:**	**Other:**
Carrots (Cooked)	Ancient Grain Cracker	Cassava (Peeled, Boiled, Steamed)
Melba Toast (Whole Grain, Rye, Oat)	Beets (Cooked)	Corn Starch
Green Peas**	Breton™ Wheat Crackers	Gnocchi
Plantain (Green, Boiled)	Chestnuts (Roasted, Steamed)	Plantain (Ripe, Fried)
Popcorn (Air-popped)	Corn	Potato (Instant Mashed)
Sunflower Oat Crisp Crackers (e.g. Ryvita Crispbread™)	French Fries*	Potato (Cooked Hot)
Sweet Potato (Boiled, Steamed)	Parsnip	Pretzels
Winter Squash	Potato (Cooked Cooled)	Rice Cakes
	Pumpkin	Rice Crackers
	Rye Crisp Crackers (e.g. Ryvita Rye Crispbread™)	Soda Crackers
	Semolina	Sweet potato (Fried, Baked)
	Taro, Eddoe (Boiled)	Yam (Roasted, Mashed)
	Triscuit™ Original Crackers	
	Yam (Steamed, Boiled)	

**Snow and snap peas are considered non-starchy vegetables so are not included in the chart.

FRUITS

Apple	Banana (Ripe, Yellow)	Banana (Brown, Overripe)
Applesauce (Unsweetened)	Cherries (Canned)	Breadfruit (Roasted)
Apricots (Fresh, Dried)	Cranberries (Dried)	
Banana (Green, Unripe)	Figs (Dried)	
Berries	Grapes	
Breadfruit (Boiled)	Lychee (Fresh)	
Cantaloupe	Jackfruit	
Cherries (Fresh)	Pineapple	
Dates (Fresh, Dried)	Persimmons	
Durian	Raisins	
Figs (Fresh)	Watermelon	
Guava		
Grapefruit		
Honeydew Melon		
Kiwi		
Longan		
Mandarin		
Mango		
Nectarines		
Orange		
Papaya		
Passionfruit		
Peach		
Pear		
Plum		
Pomegranate		
Pomelo		
Prunes		
Starfruit		

Some fruits have not been assigned a GI because they contain less than 15 g of available carbohydrate per serving (e.g. lemon and lime).

DAIRY & ALTERNATIVES

Low Glycemic Index (55 or less) Choose MOST Often	Medium Glycemic Index (56 to 69) Choose LESS Often	High Glycemic Index (70 or more) Choose LEAST Often
Almond Milk	Oat Milk, unsweetened	Rice Milk
Chocolate Milk (1%, 2%)*	Processed Cheese (e.g. processed cheese slices, cream cheese)*	
Cheese (Natural, e.g. cheddar)		
Cottage Cheese		
Cow's Milk (Skim, 1%, 2%)		
Frozen Yogurt (Reduced Fat)*		
Greek Yogurt (Plain, 0%, 2%, Reduced Sugar)		
Ice Cream (Reduced Fat)*		
Kefir (Plain, Unsweetened)		
Soy or Nut Cheese		
Soy Milk (Unsweetened, Reduced Sugar)		
Yogurt, (Plain, Reduced Sugar-0%, 2%)		

PROTEIN SOURCES

Baked Beans	Lentil Soup (ready-made)	Broad Beans
Black Beans	Split Pea Soup (ready-made)	
Black Eyed Peas		
Chickpeas		
Hummus		
Kidney Beans		
Lentils		
Mung Beans		
Nuts, Seeds		
Romano Beans		
Soybeans/Edamame/Tempeh		
Split Peas		

Additional Items:	Additional Items:	Additional Items:

References:

International tables of glycemic index and glycemic load values, 2021, University of Sydney, Glycemic Index Research, GI Search Tool

References:

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