

What is the GI Diet?

GI stands for Glycaemic Index and is a measure of the impact of food on your blood sugar. Foods with a high GI tend to quickly raise your body's blood sugar levels, by contrast foods with a low GI will raise them more slowly and over a longer period. Low GI foods can help even out blood glucose levels when you have diabetes and may protect against diabetes. Lower GI diets have also been associated with improved levels of 'good' cholesterol. One or two small changes can make all the difference.

Foods are given a GI number according to their effect on blood glucose levels. Glucose or white bread is used as the standard reference (GI 100), and other foods are measured against this. It was previously thought that if you ate the same amount of carbohydrate, then whatever that carbohydrate was, it would have the same effect on your blood glucose levels. It is now known that different carbohydrate-containing foods have different effects on blood glucose levels. For instance, 30g of bread does not have the same effect as 30g of fruit or pasta.

Eating lots of high GI foods has two disadvantages:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.

How can the GI Diet 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. On the GI diet your desire to snack or over eat should be greatly reduced, therefore by eating fewer calories you can control your weight.

What does the GI diet look like?

People on the GI diet will tend to eat meals that consist of foods with low GI and will be encouraged to avoid high GI foods. However mixing low GI foods with high GI foods lowers the GI of the whole meal, this can make it much less restrictive than other diets. Low GI does not always mean low fat, so it is advisable to watch the fat content in your meals.

What foods can't I eat?

On the GI diet there are no foods that you can't eat but the secret is eating more low GI foods than high GI foods. A list of low GI foods can be found below. Check out recipes in a book or on the web eg. <http://www.the-gi-diet.org/recipes/> for more examples of what you can eat.

The main thing is not to over-eat and the purpose of the GI diet is to help you achieve that. It is important that you watch the portion sizes of your meals and try to keep them down.

Practical hints for living the low GI diet

The intention of the GI diet is that it does not feel like dieting so you can maintain it for longer. Here are some practical hints for putting together low GI meals. Determining the GI of a meal is not so easy as reading a number off a chart. The addition of fat and protein slows down the absorption of

carbohydrate. Chocolate has a medium GI because of its fat content. Milk and other dairy products have a low GI because of their high protein content, and the fact they contain fat. The consequence of this is that if people were to confine themselves to low GI foods, their diet would be unbalanced and high in fat, which could lead to weight gain and increase their risk of heart disease. For this reason it is important not to focus exclusively on GI and to think as well about the overall balance of the diet.

Cooking method (frying, boiling and baking), processing, the ripeness of a fruit and the variety of a vegetable will also all affect a food's GI rating. The structure and texture of a carbohydrate have an effect as well. Pasta and durum wheat have a low GI rating, whilst whole grains and high-fibre foods act as a physical barrier that slows down the absorption of carbohydrate. This is not the same as 'wholemeal', where, even though the whole of the grain is included, it has been ground up instead of left whole. For example, some mixed grain breads that include wholegrains have a lower GI than either wholemeal or white bread.

Staples

One of the problems with diets like the Atkins diet was the denial of staples. Meat just tastes so much better with carbs. But on the low GI diet no such sacrifices are necessary. Pasta, sweet potatoes, white long-grain rice and high soy and linseed breads are three low GI staples you can eat with any meal.

White pasta made from durum wheat or wholemeal pastas are excellent for quick, easy meals. Try mixing it with bacon, tinned tomatoes, peas, herbs and seasoning for a meal in minutes.

Generally speaking potatoes should be avoided on the low GI diet, but sweet potatoes are fine, which is great as they taste so good! Roast them for 40 minutes in the oven and serve them with a low GI sauce like heated chickpeas, tinned tomatoes and frozen spinach.

White long-grain rice that requires boiling for 15 minutes or so is the best choice for low GI. Next best is basmati. Avoid glutinous or instant rice's as these tend to have GI's off the scale. This can be served nicely with a chicken and vegetable stir fry.

Snacks

The purpose of the low GI diet is that you feel less hungry so you want to snack less. However for those times when you feel a little peckish between meals here are a few things you can nibble in moderation:

- Dried apples, apricots and prunes are all low GI.
- A bowl of All-Bran.
- Reduced sugar chocolate. But watch the fat content.
- Semi-skimmed milk.
- A small quantity of unsalted nuts.
- Plain popcorn.

High, Medium and Low GI Foods

The list below shows the glycaemic index of lots of foods. If you prefer the traffic light system used in the low G.I. diet book by Rick Gallop you can find the same data below arranged in red, yellow and green zones on the following web page: <http://www.the-gi-diet.org/glycemicindexchart/>

For help choosing what to buy and eat when out and about you can keep details of GI values with you using one of the cheap pocket guides; such as: [The Glycaemic Load Counter](#) or [The New Glucose Revolution Shopper's Guide to GI Values 2008](#)

Glycaemic (or glyceimic) Index

The number listed next to each food is it's glycaemic index. This is a value obtained by monitoring a persons blood sugar after eating the food. The value can vary slightly from person to person and from one type or brand of food and another. A noticeable difference is the GI rating of Special-K which produced considerably different results in tests in the US and Australia, most likely resulting from different ingredients in each location. Despite this slight variation the index provide a good guide to which foods you should be eating and which foods to avoid.

The glycaemic index range is as follows:

Low GI = 55 or less

Medium GI = 56 - 69

High GI = 70 or more

Breakfast Cereal

Low GI	
All-bran (UK/Aus)	30
All-bran (US)	50
Oat bran	50
Rolled Oats	51
Special K (UK/Aus)	54
Natural Muesli	40
Porridge	58

Medium GI	
Bran Buds	58
Mini Wheats	58
Nutrigrain	66
Shredded Wheat	67
Porridge Oats	63
Special K (US)	69

High GI	
Cornflakes	80
Sultana Bran	73
Branflakes	74
Coco Pops	77
Puffed Wheat	80
Oats in Honey Bake	77
Team	82
Total	76
Cheerios	74
Rice Krispies	82
Weetabix	74

Staples

Low GI	
Wheat Pasta Shapes	54
New Potatoes	54
Meat Ravioli	39
Spaghetti	32
Tortellini (Cheese)	50
Egg Fettuccini	32
Brown Rice	50
Buckwheat	51
White long grain rice	50
Pearled Barley	22
Yam	35
Sweet Potatoes	48
Instant Noodles	47
Wheat tortilla	30

Medium GI	
Basmati Rice	58
Couscous	61
Cornmeal	68
Taco Shells	68
Gnocchi	68
Canned Potatoes	61
Chinese (Rice) Vermicelli	58
Baked Potatoes	60
Wild Rice	57

High GI	
Instant White Rice	87
Glutinous Rice	86
Short Grain White Rice	83
Tapioca	70
Fresh Mashed Potatoes	73
French Fries	75
Instant Mashed Potatoes	80

Bread

Low GI	
Soya and Linseed	36
Wholegrain Pumpemickel	46
Heavy Mixed Grain	45
Whole Wheat	49
Sourdough Rye	48
Sourdough Wheat	54

Medium GI	
Croissant	67
Hamburger bun	61
Pita, white	57
Wholemeal Rye	62

High GI	
White	71
Bagel	72
French Baguette	95

Snacks & Sweet Foods

Low GI	
Slim-Fast meal replacement	27
Snickers Bar (high fat)	41
Nut & Seed Muesli Bar	49
Sponge Cake	46
Nutella	33
Milk Chocolate	42
Hummus	6
Peanuts	13
Walnuts	15
Cashew Nuts	25
Nuts and Raisins	21
Jam	51
Corn Chips	42
Oatmeal Crackers	55

Medium GI	
Ryvita	63
Digestives	59
Blueberry muffin	59
Honey	58

High GI	
Pretzels	83
Water Crackers	78
Rice cakes	87
Puffed Crispbread	81
Donuts	76
Scones	92
Maple flavoured syrup	68

Legumes (Beans)

Low GI	
Kidney Beans (canned)	52
Butter Beans	36
Chick Peas	42
Haricot/Navv Beans	31
Lentils, Red	21
Lentils, Green	30
Pinto Beans	45
Blackeyed Beans	50
Yellow Split Peas	32

Medium GI	
Beans in Tomato Sauce	56

Vegetables

Low GI	
Frozen Green Peas	39
Frozen Sweet Corn	47
Raw Carrots	16
Boiled Carrots	41
Eggplant/Aubergine	15
Broccoli	10
Cauliflower	15
Cabbage	10
Mushrooms	10
Tomatoes	15
Chillies	10
Lettuce	10
Green Beans	15
Red Peppers	10
Onions	10

Medium GI	
Beetroot	64

High GI	
Pumpkin	75
Parsnips	97

Fruits

Low GI	
Cherries	22
Plums	24
Grapefruit	25
Peaches	28
Peach, canned in natural juice	30
Apples	34
Pears	41
Dried Apricots	32
Grapes	43
Coconut	45
Coconut Milk	41
Kiwi Fruit	47
Oranges	40
Strawberries	40
Prunes	29

Medium GI	
Mango	60
Sultanas	56
Bananas	58
Raisins	64
Papaya	60
Figs	61
Pineapple	66

High GI	
Watermelon	80
Dates	103

Dairy

Low GI	
Whole milk	31
Skimmed milk	32
Chocolate milk	42
Sweetened yoghurt	33
Artificially Sweetened Yoghurt	23
Custard	35
Soy Milk	44

Medium GI Ice cream	62
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