

Low-GI Nutrition

Glycemic Index (GI):

The glycemic Index (GI) was developed in the early 1980s by Dr. David Jenkins, a Nutritional Sciences Professor at University of Toronto. It ranks carbohydrate-rich foods according to their effect on blood glucose levels. Choosing low-GI carbohydrates, the ones that create small fluctuations in your blood glucose and insulin levels, is the secret to long-term health.

When you eat food that contains carbohydrates, the sugar (glucose) from the food breaks down during digestion and gives you energy. After you eat, your blood glucose level rises; the speed at which the food is able to increase your blood glucose level is called the “glycemic response.”

Carbohydrates are ranked from 0 to 100, depending on how high your blood sugar levels are raised after a meal. Foods that raise your blood glucose level quickly have a higher GI rating than foods that raise your blood glucose level slowly. In general, the lower the rating, the better the quality of carbohydrate and the overall nutritional benefit.

Low-GI foods are usually low in calories and fat, while also being high in fibre, nutrients and antioxidants. Choosing low-GI foods more often is the key to living a long and healthy life.

Glycemic Index (GI) vs. Glycemic Load (GL):

The glycemic load (GL) is a relatively new way to assess the impact of carbohydrate consumption. It takes the GI into account; however, it gives a fuller picture than the GI alone.

A GI value only tells you how rapidly a particular carbohydrate turns into sugar; it doesn't tell you how much of that carbohydrate is in a serving of a particular food. In order to fully understand a food's effect on blood sugar you need to know both these things.

That is where GL comes in. For example, the carbohydrate in watermelon has a high GI; however, there isn't a lot of it, so watermelon's GL is relatively low. A GL of 20 or more is high, a GL of 11 to 19 is medium, and a GL of 10 or less is low. Foods that have a low GL almost always have a low GI; therefore, foods with a low-GL are the best choices for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

Health Benefits of Low-GI Eating:

The low-GI diet can accommodate nursing mothers, vegetarians, athletes, youth, children and many more individuals. This is because the low-GI diet caters to a wide variety of individual's unique eating habits.

Eating a lot of high-GI foods can be detrimental to your health, especially if you are overweight and sedentary. Switching to eating mainly low-GI carbohydrates will help keep your energy levels balanced and make you feel like a new and healthier you!

Low-GI has multiple health benefits, including:

- Weight loss and maintenance
- Manages Diabetes
- Reduces risk of heart disease
- Prolongs endurance
- Reduces hunger and keeps you full longer

Incorporating Low-GI Foods:

Anyone can incorporate low-GI foods into their lifestyle with minimal fuss. Here are a few tips:

1. Choose breads that contain a high proportion of whole or cracked grains, stone-ground whole-wheat flour, rye, oats, bran and/or seeds.
2. Choose unrefined cereals, such as, large-flake rolled oats, oat bran, wheat bran and muesli
3. Choose brown, wild, basmati or converted rice
4. Choose sweet potatoes or yams rather than white potatoes
5. Eat a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables every day
6. Choose fruit and dairy-based desserts; such as, berries with low-fat ice cream
7. Enjoy more whole grain pasta, legumes, vegetables and low-fat dairy products
8. Try tofu, barley, quinoa and bulgur
9. Use vinaigrette dressing rather than a creamy salad dressing
10. Try to include at least one low-GI food at each meal

Low-GI Foods (choose these most often):	Medium-GI Foods (choose fairly often):	High-GI Foods (choose these least often):
Skim milk Plain Yogurt Soy beverage Apple/plum/orange Sweet potato Sprouted wheat bread or tortilla Pumpernickel bread Oatmeal (slow cook oats) All-Bran™ Barley Bulgar Quinoa Lentils/kidney/baked beans Chick peas Vegetables	Banana Pineapple Raisins New potatoes Split pea or green pea soup Brown and Basmati rice Couscous Basmati rice Shredded wheat cereal Whole grain bread (coarse) Rye bread Pasta and Noodles (al Dente – firm)	White and Whole Wheat Breads/Bagels Instant mashed potatoes Baked white potato Instant rice and noodles Corn Flakes™ Rice Krispies™ Cheerios™ Soda crackers Jellybeans French fries Rice Cakes Pretzels Popcorn Cookies Cakes Table sugar (sucrose) Fruit Juice Dried Fruit