# **Glycemic Index Food Guide**

The glycemic index (GI) is a scale that ranks a carbohydrate-containing food or drink by how much it raises blood sugar levels after it is eaten or drank. Foods with a high GI increase blood sugar higher and faster than foods with a low GI.

There are three GI categories:







Green = Go

Low GI (55 or less) Choose Most Often

#### Yellow = Caution

Medium GI (56 to 69) Choose Less Often

## Red = Stop and think

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 to lower GI.

### A low GI diet may help you:

- decrease risk of type 2 diabetes and its complications
- decrease risk of heart disease and stroke
- · feel full longer
- maintain or lose weight

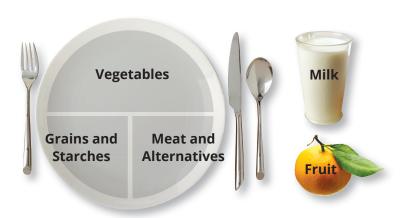
# Try these meal planning ideas to lower meal GI:

- Cook your pasta al dente (firm). Check your pasta package instructions for cooking time.
- Make fruits and milk part of your meal plate (Figure 1). These foods often have a low GI and make a healthy dessert.
- Try lower GI grains, such as barley and bulgur.
- Pulses can be grains and starches or meat and alternatives. 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.

# Diabetes Canada recommends choosing lower GI foods and drinks more often to help control blood sugar.

Work with your 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.



**Figure 1:** The Plate Method. Using a standard dinner plate, follow this model to control your portion sizes. www.diabetes.ca/mealplanning

Some carbohydrate-containing foods and drinks have so little carbohydrate that they do not have a GI value. This does not mean they cannot be included as part of a healthy diet. Examples include green vegetables, lemons, and some low-carbohydrate drinks. Diabetes Canada calls these foods and drinks "free" because they do not impact the blood sugar of people living with diabetes. You can put free foods in the green category, but they do not have a GI and have not been included in the food lists.



Items with this symbol are "sometimes foods"

(foods and drinks eaten only on occasion)



#### **Grains and Starches Low Glycemic Index Medium Glycemic Index High Glycemic Index (55 or less)** (70 or more) (56 to 69) **Choose Most Often Choose Less Often Choose Least Often Breads: Breads: Breads:** Chapati (White, Whole Wheat) Heavy Mixed Grain Breads Bread (White, Whole Wheat) Spelt Bread Flaxseed/Linseed Bread Naan (White, Whole Wheat) Sourdough Bread Pita Bread (White, Whole Wheat) Cereal: Tortilla (Whole Grain) Pumpernickel Bread All-Bran Flakes™ Cereal Cereal: Roti (White, Whole Wheat) Corn Flakes™ Cereal All-Bran™ Cereal Rye Bread Cream of Wheat™ (Instant) All-Bran Buds™ (Light, Dark, Whole Grain) Puffed Wheat Cereal With Psyllium Cereal Stone Ground Whole Rice Krispies™ Cereal Special K™ Cereal Oat Bran Wheat Bread Oats (Steel Cut) Whole Grain Wheat Bread **Grains: Grains:** Cereal: Jasmine Rice Barley Cream of Wheat™ (Regular) Millet Bulgur Oats (Instant) Sticky Rice Mung Bean Noodles Oats (Large Flake) White Rice (Instant) Pasta (Al Dente, Firm) Oats (Quick) Other: Pulse Flours **Grains:** Carrots\* Quinoa Basmati Rice Potato (Instant Mashed) Rice (Converted, Parboiled) Brown Rice Potato (Red, White, Hot) Other: Cornmeal Pretzels Peas Couscous Rice Cakes Soda Crackers Popcorn (Regular, Whole Wheat) Sweet Potato Rice Noodles Winter Squash White Rice (Short, Long Grain) Wild Rice Other: Beets\* Corn French Fries 🛕 Parsnip Potato (Red, White, Cooled) Rye Crisp Crackers (e.g. Ryvita Rye Crispbread™) Stoned Wheat Thins™ Crackers **Additional foods: Additional foods: Additional foods:** 1. 1. 1.

2.

3.

2.

3.

2.

3.

<sup>\*</sup> Most starchy/sweet vegetables (e.g. peas, parsnip, winter squash) provide 15 g or more carbohydrate per 1 cup serving. Beets and carrots often provide less than 15 g carbohydrate per serving (marked above with \*). Most non-starchy (or free) vegetables (e.g. tomato and lettuce) have not been assigned a GI because they have very little carbohydrate and have very little effect on blood sugar.

#### **Fruits Low Glycemic Index Medium Glycemic Index High Glycemic Index** (55 or less) (56 to 69) (70 or more) **Choose Most Often Choose Less Often Choose Least Often** Banana (Ripe, Yellow) Banana (Brown, Overripe) Apple Cherries (Bottled) Apricot (Fresh, Dried) Watermelon Banana (Green, Unripe) Cherries (Fresh) Berries Cranberries (Dried) Cantaloupe Figs (Fresh, Dried) Grapefruit Grapes Honeydew Melon Kiwi Mango Lychee Orange Pineapple Peach Raisins Pear Plum Pomegranate Prunes **Additional foods: Additional foods: Additional foods:** 1. 1. 1. 2. 2. 2. 3. 3. 3.

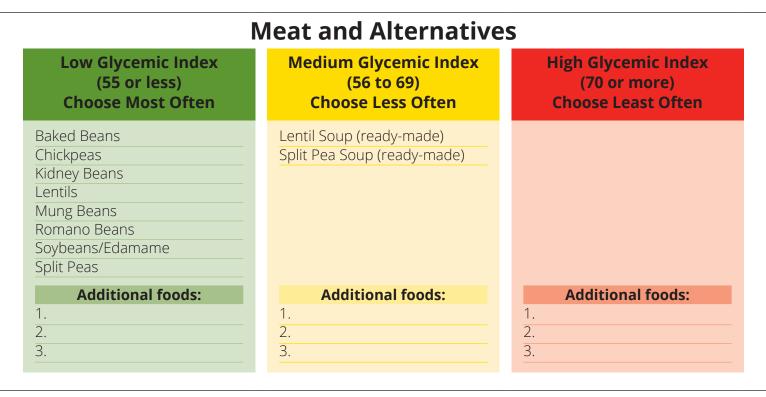
Some fruits have not been assigned a GI because they contain less than 15 g of available carbohydrate per serving (e.g. lemon and lime).



Many fruits and vegetables fall in the low or medium GI categories.

Milk, Alternatives and Other Beverages		
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 Cow Milk (Skim, 1%, 2%, Whole) Frozen Yogurt Greek Yogurt Soy Milk Yogurt (Skim, 1%, 2%, Whole)		Rice Milk
Additional foods:  1. 2. 3.	Additional foods:  1. 2. 3.	Additional foods:  1. 2. 3.

Milk, alternatives, and other beverages listed include flavoured (e.g. chocolate), sweetened and unsweetened varieties.



Meat, poultry and fish do not have a GI because they do not contain carbohydrate. When ½ cup or more of pulses are eaten, they can be included in the Grains and Starches food group or the Meats and Alternatives group.

Diabetes Canada is making the invisible epidemic of diabetes visible and urgent. Eleven million Canadians have diabetes or prediabetes. Now is the time to End Diabetes - its health impacts, as well as the blame, shame and misinformation associated with it. Diabetes Canada partners with Canadians to End Diabetes through education and support services, resources for health-care professionals, advocacy to governments, schools and workplaces, and funding research to improve treatments and find a cure.

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