

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 drunk. 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.

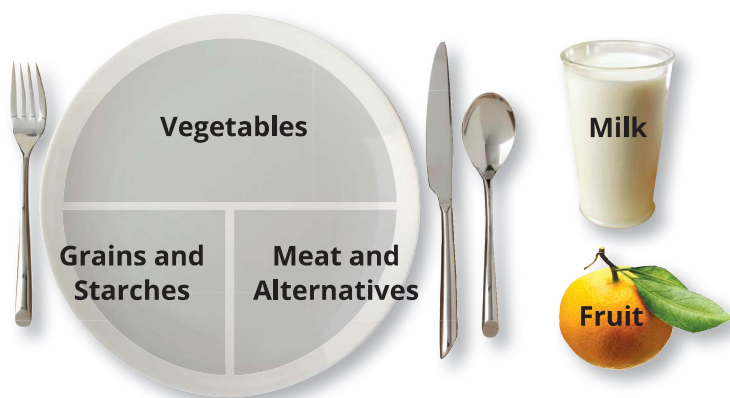


Figure 1: The Plate Method. Using a standard dinner plate, follow this model to control your portion sizes. www.diabetes.ca/mealplanning

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 (55 or less) Choose Most Often

Breads:

Heavy Mixed Grain Breads
Spelt Bread
Sourdough Bread
Tortilla (Whole Grain)

Cereal:

All-Bran™ Cereal
All-Bran Buds™
With Psyllium Cereal
Oat Bran
Oats (Steel Cut)

Grains:

Barley
Bulgur
Mung Bean Noodles
Pasta (Al Dente, Firm)
Pulse Flours
Quinoa
Rice (Converted, Parboiled)

Other:

Peas
Popcorn
Sweet Potato
Winter Squash

Additional foods:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Medium Glycemic Index (56 to 69) Choose Less Often

Breads:

Chapati (White, Whole Wheat)
Flaxseed/Linseed Bread
Pita Bread (White, Whole Wheat)
Pumpernickel Bread
Roti (White, Whole Wheat)
Rye Bread
(Light, Dark, Whole Grain)
Stone Ground Whole
Wheat Bread
Whole Grain Wheat Bread


Cereal:

Cream of Wheat™ (Regular)
Oats (Instant)
Oats (Large Flake)
Oats (Quick)

Grains:

Basmati Rice
Brown Rice
Cornmeal
Couscous
(Regular, Whole Wheat)
Rice Noodles
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:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

High Glycemic Index (70 or more) Choose Least Often

Breads:

Bread (White, Whole Wheat)
Naan (White, Whole Wheat)

Cereal:

All-Bran Flakes™ Cereal
Corn Flakes™ Cereal
Cream of Wheat™ (Instant)
Puffed Wheat Cereal
Rice Krispies™ Cereal
Special K™ Cereal

Grains:

Jasmine Rice
Millet
Sticky Rice
White Rice (Instant)

Other:

Carrots*
Potato (Instant Mashed)
Potato (Red, White, Hot)
Pretzels
Rice Cakes
Soda Crackers

Additional foods:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

* 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 (55 or less) Choose Most Often

- Apple
- Apricot (Fresh, Dried)
- Banana (Green, Unripe)
- Berries
- Cantaloupe
- Grapefruit
- Honeydew Melon
- Mango
- Orange
- Peach
- Pear
- Plum
- Pomegranate
- Prunes

Additional foods:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Medium Glycemic Index (56 to 69) Choose Less Often

- Banana (Ripe, Yellow)
- Cherries (Bottled) ▲
- Cherries (Fresh)
- Cranberries (Dried)
- Figs (Fresh, Dried)
- Grapes
- Kiwi
- Lychee
- Pineapple
- Raisins

Additional foods:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

High Glycemic Index (70 or more) Choose Least Often

- Banana (Brown, Overripe)
- Watermelon

Additional foods:


1. _____
2. _____
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 and 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
Baked Beans Chickpeas Kidney Beans Lentils Mung Beans Romano Beans Soybeans/Edamame Split Peas	Lentil Soup (ready-made) Split Pea Soup (ready-made)	
Additional foods: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	Additional foods: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	Additional foods: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

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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