

# The glycemic index

Choosing the right amount and type of carbohydrate foods helps manage your blood glucose levels. The glycemic index is one tool that helps you choose which carbohydrate foods to eat.

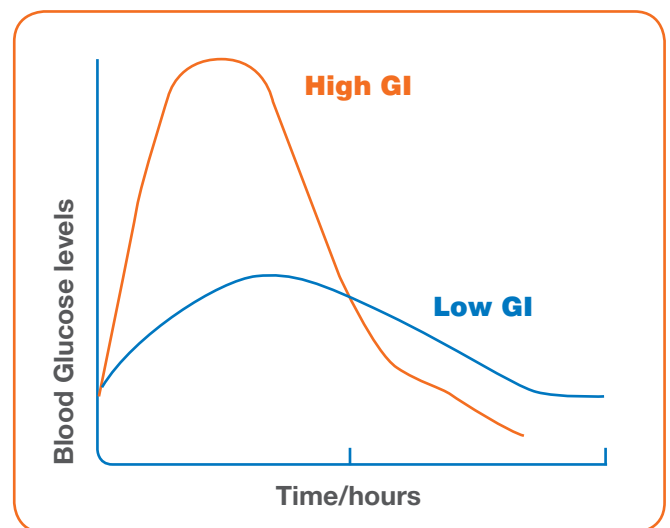
Carbohydrate foods are the main source of energy for your body. Foods high in carbohydrate include bread, pasta, rice, grains, cereals, fruits, starchy vegetables, legumes, milk and yoghurt. Your body breaks down carbohydrate from these foods into glucose, which then enters your bloodstream.

## What is the glycemic index?

The glycemic index (GI) ranks how quickly or slowly carbohydrate foods affect blood glucose levels.

High-GI carbohydrate foods break down into glucose quickly, which means a higher and faster rise in blood glucose levels after eating.

Low-GI carbohydrate foods break down into glucose over a longer period of time. Compared with high-GI foods, they result in a smaller and slower rise in blood glucose levels after eating.



Acknowledgement [glycemicindex.com](http://glycemicindex.com)

## What are the benefits of a low-GI eating plan?

Research has shown that people with diabetes can improve their blood glucose levels after meals and lower average blood glucose levels (HbA1c) by including lower GI carbohydrate foods as part of a healthy eating plan.

Low-GI diets have also been shown to:

- » help with weight management
- » improve blood cholesterol levels.

These factors are also important for managing diabetes and reducing the risk of long-term diabetes-related complications.

## Are all low-GI foods healthy?

Some foods with a low GI, such as potato chips, chocolate and ice cream, are not healthy everyday food choices.

When choosing low-GI foods, it is essential to also consider the overall nutritional value of the food, including the number of kilojoules, saturated fat, salt (sodium) and fibre.

It's important to remember that the GI is just one tool to help you manage your diabetes. You also need to consider the total amount of carbohydrate in the foods you eat throughout the day.

## Examples of lower GI foods

<b>Breads</b>	Low-GI varieties include dense grainy/seeded breads, pumpernickel, authentic sourdough and white corn tortillas. Look for breads with the GI symbol.
<b>Breakfast cereals</b>	Low-GI varieties include traditional rolled oats or steel-cut oats, wheat, rice or oat bran and natural muesli. Look for cereals with the GI symbol.
<b>Grains</b>	Grains include pasta (most types), fresh rice noodles, soba noodles, mung bean (bean thread noodles), Basmati rice, Doongara™ rice, quinoa, barley, bulgur (cracked wheat), buckwheat, pearl (Israeli) couscous and freekeh.
<b>Legumes</b>	Other than broad beans, all dried and canned legumes have a low GI. Examples include baked beans, kidney beans, soy beans, mixed beans, cannellini beans, haricot beans, butter beans, brown/green/red lentils, split peas, black eyed peas and chickpeas.
<b>Starchy vegetables</b>	Relatively low-GI vegetables include taro, parsnips, sweet corn and orange sweet potatoes.
<b>Dairy foods</b>	Milk, soy milk, yoghurt and custard naturally have a low GI. Look for low-fat, unsweetened varieties.
<b>Biscuits and crackers</b>	Lower GI varieties include grainy/seeded crackers and biscuits with oats and dried fruit. Look for varieties with the GI symbol.
<b>Fruit</b>	Most fruits have a low GI, including apples, bananas, pears, oranges, peaches apricots, plums, mangoes, nectarines, grapes, kiwifruit and prunes.



### Tips for eating low GI

- Try to include a nutritious low-GI food at each meal.
- Replace high-GI carbohydrate foods for lower GI options (so long as they're still a nutritious option). A dietitian can help you with this.
- Replace some of the high-GI foods in a meal with a low-GI option to lower the overall GI of the meal.
- Look for products with the GI symbol logo. This indicates that the food has been tested at an accredited laboratory and meets strict nutrient criteria that are in line with the Dietary Guidelines for Australians. However, not all foods with a low GI will have the GI symbol logo.



### More information

For more information about the glycemic index, visit [glycemicindex.com](http://glycemicindex.com) and [gisymbol.com](http://gisymbol.com).

To find an accredited practising dietitian, contact the Dietitians Association of Australia on **1800 812 942** or visit [daa.asn.au](http://daa.asn.au).

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## The NDSS and you

A wide range of services and support is available through the NDSS to help you manage your diabetes. This includes information on diabetes management through the NDSS Helpline and website. The products, services and education programs available can help you stay on top of your diabetes.

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