

Healthy Eating Using the Glycemic Index

Carbohydrates are the most important source of energy for the body. Foods that contain carbohydrates include grains (e.g., cereals, breads), milk products, fruits, starchy vegetables (e.g., potatoes, corn) and sweets. When consumed, carbohydrates break down into sugar which enters the blood stream as glucose (or blood sugar). This glucose is used by your body for energy especially by your brain and muscles.

The Glycemic Index is a scale that ranks carbohydrate-rich foods by how much they raise blood sugars.

Choosing **Low Glycemic Index** foods can help you:

- Control your blood sugar levels
- Control your cholesterol level
- Control your appetite
- Lower your risk of getting heart disease
- Lower your risk of getting type 2 diabetes

Low Glycemic Foods Include:

- High fibre breads and cereals
- Barley, couscous, beans and lentils
- Fruits and vegetables
- Milk and yogurt



Using the Glycemic Index to choose healthy foods is only one part of healthy eating.

Healthy eating also means:

- Eating at regular meal times
- Choosing a variety of foods from all the food groups
- Limiting sugars and sweets
- Including small amounts of healthy fats
- Including high fibre foods
- Limiting salt, alcohol and caffeine

Myth

Sugar and Your Blood Glucose

It is often believed that eating sugar-containing foods causes a rise in blood glucose followed by an extreme low, resulting in fatigue and food cravings. The idea of a “sugar high” followed by a “sugar crash” is, in fact, a myth. In healthy people, the body keeps blood glucose levels within a tight range. A gradual rise after eating, followed by a slow decline, is a normal part of the body’s regulation of blood glucose.

Check out the Canadian Diabetes Association website, diabetes.ca, for more information

Adapted from:

Canadian Diabetes Association - The Glycemic Index - August 2011

Canadian Sugar Institute – Understanding the Glycemic Index - June 2011