

# 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

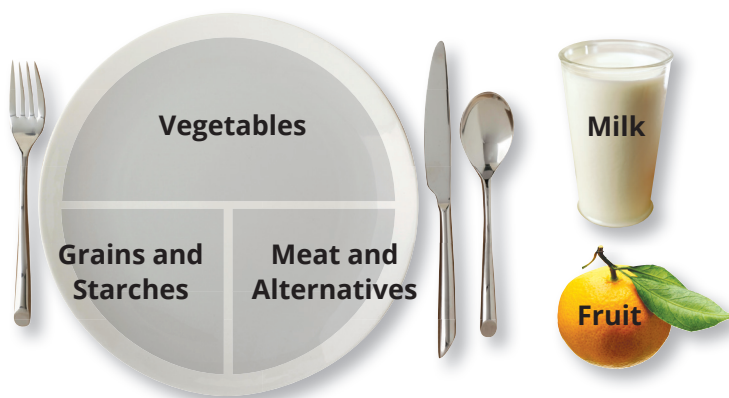
## Try these meal planning ideas to lower meal GI:

- 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](http://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**

Almond Milk  
 Cow Milk  
 (Skim, 1%, 2%, Whole)  
 Frozen Yogurt   
 Greek Yogurt  
 Soy Milk  
 Yogurt (Skim, 1%, 2%, Whole)

**Additional foods:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Medium Glycemic Index  
(56 to 69)  
Choose Less Often**

**Additional foods:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**High Glycemic Index  
(70 or more)  
Choose Least Often**

Rice Milk

**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**

Baked Beans  
 Chickpeas  
 Kidney Beans  
 Lentils  
 Mung Beans  
 Romano Beans  
 Soybeans/Edamame  
 Split Peas

**Additional foods:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Medium Glycemic Index  
(56 to 69)  
Choose Less Often**

Lentil Soup (ready-made)  
 Split Pea Soup (ready-made)

**Additional foods:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**High Glycemic Index  
(70 or more)  
Choose Least Often**

**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.

This document reflects the *Canadian Diabetes Association 2013 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Diabetes in Canada* © 2013 The Canadian Diabetes Association. The Canadian Diabetes Association is the registered owner of the name Diabetes Canada. 115009 02/18