

# Glycaemic index

## Nutrition and Dietetics

### Patient Information Leaflet

#### What is the glycaemic index?

The glycaemic index (GI) is a rating system for foods that contain carbohydrate. It shows how quickly each food affects your blood glucose level when that food is eaten on its own. Carbohydrate foods that are broken down quickly by your body and cause your blood glucose level to rise quickly have a high GI rating. Low or medium GI foods are broken down more slowly and cause a gradual rise in blood glucose levels over time.

#### How can the GI system help me to look after my diabetes?

If you have diabetes, eating foods with a lower GI rating can help to keep your blood glucose levels more stable. This table gives some ideas about healthy choices that you could make if you want to lower the GI of the carbohydrate in your diet:

Food	Healthy choices
Cereal	Porridge, All Bran*, wheat biscuits, Shredded Wheat*, Special K*
Bread	Granary, multigrain, seeded and rye bread, white and whole wheat tortilla wraps, wholemeal pitta bread, chapati
Potato	New potatoes including skins, sweet potatoes
Rice	White (long grain), basmati and brown rice
Pasta	Most types cooked al dente which means it is still quite firm
Other sides	Noodles, couscous, quinoa (a seed that looks similar to couscous and is high in fibre and protein), yams
Snacks	Fruit, yoghurt, popcorn

\*and the equivalent supermarket own brand

Here is an example of a meal plan including low and medium GI food:

<b>Breakfast</b>	Porridge topped with slices of apple and cinnamon
<b>Lunch</b>	Wholewheat tortilla wrap stuffed with meat and salad Fruit
<b>Evening</b>	Fish, sweet potato wedges and steamed vegetables Yoghurt

### **What affects the GI of foods?**

It is not just the type of carbohydrate that affects the GI of a particular food. If you eat carbohydrate as part of a high protein or high fat meal, it is digested more slowly which lowers the GI. Protein is found in meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils, chickpeas and soya.

Processing a food containing carbohydrate might raise the GI by making it easier to break down into glucose. Therefore, processed foods may have a higher GI rating.

### **What else do I need to know?**

Do not choose your food based on GI alone. You need to take into account other factors in order to make sure that your diet is balanced. It is important to keep an eye on the size of your portions, eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day and cut down on salt and saturated fat.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Nutrition and Dietetics Department on 01384 244017 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

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<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-leaflets/>

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