

Food for the Brain Information Sheet – GLYCEMIC LOAD

Each and every food that you eat and drink affects your body in a different way. It is important to consider this when selecting foods, not only does it have a bearing on your long-term health, it also can have an immediate effect on your energy levels and blood sugar levels which can contribute to feelings of ill-health, both mentally and physically. To make understanding of how the carbohydrate content in foods impacts our bodies and blood sugar levels easier, all the foods that we eat can be classified by Glycemic Index (GI) and Glycemic Load (GL).

- **What is a Glycemic Index (GI)?** GI ranks foods on how quickly they are digested into sugars and how quickly it impacts our blood sugar, but... it does not reflect the portion size.
- **What is the Glycemic Load (GL)?** The GL reflects the amount of carbohydrates a food contains and it's GI. We can only know the GL if we know the quantity (portion size) of the food.

In other words the GI = is how quick, and the GL = how much and how quick.

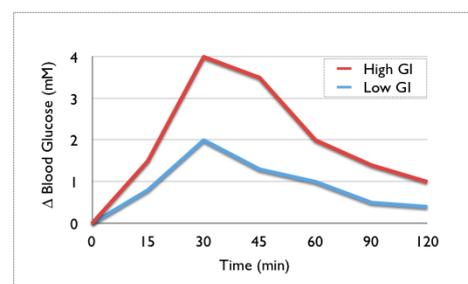
Because the GL of a food looks at both components, the same food can have a high GI, but an overall low GL. The GL index is also ideal in estimating the GL of a complete meal, including drinks, by adding all components together. i.e. Bread + strawberry jam + cola = very high GI and very high GL

Glycemic Load and your health

Foods with a low GL keep blood sugar levels consistent, meaning that excessive blood sugar highs followed by a blood sugar drop can be avoided — this 'blood sugar roller-coaster' is what we can clearly see in mood-swings in some children (and adults) after eating a chocolate bar for example.

Watching the GL of the foods you eat can have a big impact on your health in many ways (a simple chart below depicts the effect high GI and low GI foods can have on our blood glucose levels after eating):

- **Make it easier to lose weight**
- **Avoid food induced mood swings**
- **Help prevent insulin resistance and diabetes**
- **Lower: heart disease risk, cancer risk, Alzheimer's/diabetes risk**
- **Reduce PMS and menopausal symptoms**
- **Have control over our food choices by reducing sugar cravings**



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Glycemic Load and Diet: Glycemic Loads in Favorite Foods

Initially it can be a bit of a challenge to figure out if a food has a high or a low GL, but as a general guideline, the more fibre a food has the better, and if tastes sweet it probable has a high GI. To start off below we have a handy list of high and low GL food:

	Low GL	High GL
Breads	Pumpernickel, rye, sourdough, soya and linseed, barley and sunflower, granary, seeded breads and pitta breads (moderate GL), oatcakes, rye crackers (moderate GL)	White, wholemeal, French stick, rice cakes, cream crackers, bread sticks
Cereal	Whole oats, no added sugar muesli, bran sticks, semolina, quinoa, buckwheat	Sweetened cereals, rice based cereals, bran flakes, wheat biscuits, shredded wheat
Pasta	Egg-based pasta, mung bean noodles, spelt pasta, kamut pasta	Overcooked pasta and pasta ready-meals requiring re-heating
Rice	Basmati rice, red Camargue rice, brown rice (moderate GL), bulgur or cracked wheat, couscous, pearl barley	Short grain, sticky white rice
Potatoes	Baby new potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, celeriac, swede	Large floury white potatoes, French fries, mashed potato
Low GL fruit and vegetables		
Fruits	Vegetables	
Rhubarb, grapes, limes, passion fruit, lemons, grapefruit, avocados, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, redcurrants, blackcurrants, cherries, nectarines, melons, blackberries, apples pears, gooseberries, plums, satsumas, clementine's, cranberries, mandarins, tangerines, pears, pomegranates	Leeks, cabbage, watercress, new potatoes, spinach, aubergines, radishes, rocket, spring greens, asparagus, baby carrots, fresh peas, tomatoes, runner beans, lettuce, cucumber, courgettes, peppers, mangetout, pumpkin, onions, fennel, wild mushrooms, squash, turnips, red cabbage, celeriac, swede, Brussels sprouts, chicory, cauliflower, kale, celery, mushrooms, purple sprouting broccoli	
Legumes are also great low GL foods, for example, lentils, beans (eg. butter, haricot, cannellini, kidney, soya)		

NB: There are very detailed list available on the internet which index individual food by their GI and the GL per serving size. For instance an Apple has a GI of 39 and a GL of 6 and a ripe banana a GI of 62 and GL of 16. The GI is a measurement between 1-100 (100 is pure glucose) and the GL is calculated by the measuring the carbohydrate content in grams (g), multiplied by the food's GI, and divided by 100