

## USING THE GLYCEMIC INDEX (To Enhance Your Carbohydrate Counting Education)

Once you feel that you have a good understanding of the basics of carbohydrate counting, then you may have an interest in learning about the glycemic index for more intensive nutritional changes:

- Always include a variety of foods into your meal plan to maximize your vitamin and mineral intake.
- Remember that the Glycemic Index is not related to nutrition quality or fiber content.
- You can always test your own glycemic response to carbohydrate foods by monitoring your post meal blood glucose levels. The results can be used to determine which foods have the greatest effect on your glycemic control.

### *What is the Glycemic Index?*

The Glycemic Index (GI) ranks all carbohydrate foods according to how much they raise blood glucose levels. Each food is given a GI number. Foods are usually grouped into 3 groups: Low GI Foods, Medium GI foods, and High-GI foods.

#### Low-GI Foods:

Foods with low-GI values take longer for your body to break down into glucose than foods with higher GI. Your body absorbs low-GI foods slowly, so they raise your blood glucose level slowly. Foods with a low-GI have numbers less than 55.

#### Medium-GI Foods:

Foods with a medium-GI will raise your blood glucose more quickly than low-GI foods, but not as fast as high-GI foods. Medium-GI foods have numbers between 55 and 70.

#### High-GI Foods:

Your body quickly breaks down high-GI foods into glucose. This means that they raise your blood glucose level quickly. Foods with a high-GI have numbers greater than 70.

Low-GI (<55)		Medium-GI (55-70)		High-GI (>70)	
Plain yogurt	14	Corn	55	White bread	71
Prunes	15	Brown rice	55	Corn chips	72
Most vegetables	<15	White rice	56	Watermelon	72
Barley	25	Potato chips	56	Bagels, plain	72
Nuts	25	Oatmeal cookies	57	Mashed potatoes	73
Whole milk	30	Bran muffins	60	Honey	73
Soy milk	30	Cheese pizza	60	Puffed wheat cereal	74
Fat free milk	32	Hamburger buns	61	Doughnuts	75
Chick peas, cooked	34	Ice cream	61	French fries	75
Fruit yogurt	36	Regular sugar	65	Vanilla wafers	77
Apple	36	Instant oatmeal	66	Jelly beans	80
Tomato soup	38	Croissants	67	Pretzels	81
Carrots, cooked	39	Thin wheat crackers	67	Rice cakes	82
Apple juice	41	Rye bread	68	Crispy rice cereal	82
Spaghetti	41	Whole wheat bread	69	Instant mashed potatoes	83
Grapes	43			Baked potatoes	85
Baked beans	44			Instant rice	91
Macaroni	46			French bread	95
Old fashioned oatmeal	49			Parsnips	97
Chocolate bar	49			Dates	103
Pumpernickel bread	49				
Kidney beans	52				
Pound cake	54				
Sweet potatoes	54				

### *Tips for Estimating the Glycemic Index Value of a Food:*

Even if you can't look up a food's GI, you can still estimate whether that food has a low, medium, or high GI. Ask yourself these questions:

- *What form is the food in?* Is it whole, mashed, or juiced? Whole foods usually have a lower GI than mashed foods or juices.
- *Is the food ripe or overripe?* A very ripe food can have a higher GI than a less ripe food.
- *Is the food raw or cooked?* A food's GI is lower when it is raw, and higher when it is cooked.
- *How much fiber or fat is in the food?* High-fiber and high-fat foods usually have a lower GI.

### *Beyond the Glycemic Index: Other Keys to a Healthy Eating Plan:*

The GI may tell you how quickly foods affect your blood glucose. However, you also need to consider other issues when planning what you eat. Remember:

- *Low glycemic foods does not mean low calorie.* It is not healthy to only eat low GI foods. They may not give you all of the energy and nutrients that you need.
- *Eat plenty of foods that give you healthy nutrients, vitamins/minerals, and fiber.* Not all low GI foods are healthy foods. A candy bar has a lower GI than a slice of whole wheat bread because of the fat in the candy bar. This does not mean that the candy bar is the healthier choice.
- *Use your BG results to find out which foods affect your BG the most.* These results can be more helpful than the GI for keeping your blood glucose normal.
- *Always follow the advice of your RD* to help you choose the right kinds of foods.