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Glycemic-Index Diet*

The Glycemic Index (GI) Diet measures foods on a scale of 0-100 based on the degree to which they increase blood sugar levels in the body. Based on this rating, each food is classified as a low-, medium-, or high-GI food.

This diet argues that all foods are not created equal nor should they be treated as such. Low-GI foods are foods with a GI rating less than or equal to 55, medium-GI foods are foods rated 56-69, and high-GI foods are equal to or greater than 70 on the GI scale. The lower the GI level of the food, the slower the food is digested and absorbed. The higher the GI level, the faster the food is digested and absorbed.

Common low-GI foods include beef, chicken, lamb, scallops, winter squash, garlic, carrots, asparagus, avocados, beans, nuts, broccoli, cabbage, fennel, kale, and olive oil. Medium-GI examples are millet, watermelon, beets, sweet potatoes, corn, and leeks. High-GI foods are usually high in starch, such as potatoes, white bread, and white pasta.

The goal of this diet is to control blood sugar levels by controlling the rate of digestion – lower-GI foods digest more slowly providing a steady stream of energy rather than a spike in energy followed by a crash. Low-GI foods have less of an effect on blood sugar and insulin levels, which will lead to a longer feeling of fullness and reduced cravings as well as an increase in energy and stabilized moods. This is said to help reduce the possibility of overeating and stabilize mood.

One convenient aspect of the GI diet is the concept of food swapping: Switching out one high-GI food for a lower-GI food to make the same meal. An example of this would be using multi-grain bread (with a GI of 48) instead of white bread (with a GI of 71). Adding certain foods (such as legumes) to meals is believed to slow the rate of digestion and absorption.

Foods to include:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Whole grains
- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish
- Eggs
- Beans
- Dairy
- Nuts and seeds
- Healthy oils

Foods to avoid:

- Refined grains
- Sugar
- Trans fats
- Processed foods

Pros:

- No calorie counting
- Relatively easy to follow
- Reduced risk of heart disease
- Improved control over diabetes

Cons:

- Some math and knowledge of GI ratings required
- Selecting appropriate meals may be difficult and inefficient, especially when dining out
- May be difficult for some to avoid processed foods

Sources:

About Glycemic Index www.glycemicindex.com (http://www.glycemicindex.com/)

The Glycemic Index Diet (Low Glycemic Diet) (http://www.webmd.com/)