

GLYCAEMIC INDEX VS GLYCAEMIC LOAD

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

When it comes to food and nutrition, all the different terminology can sometimes be a little overwhelming. So, we're going to break some of them down a little.

The glycaemic index (GI) is a measure that shows how foods can affect your blood glucose levels. It compares the available carbohydrates in foods and its quality. The foods are listed on a table with ranges from 1 to 100, with sugar or glucose given the score of 100.

Simply put, the lower the GI of a food, the slower the food is digested and the smaller the rise in blood glucose levels. While the higher the GI, the faster the rise in blood glucose levels. This could also imply that foods with higher GI are more processed foods and are low in fibre or fat content.

Here is a list of common foods and which category of GI they fall under:

- + High GI foods > 70-100: Dried fruits, watermelon, sodas, potatoes
- + Moderate GI foods > 55-69: Porridge, potato chips, pita bread, plain chocolate
- + Low GI foods < 55: Oats, berries, milk, nuts

While it is helpful to know the glycaemic indices of most common foods, it also has its limitation. It is important to take into consideration the amount of carbohydrates each serving of food has.

This is where glycaemic load (GL) comes in.

Glycaemic load is defined as the GI value of the food multiplied by the amount of total available carbohydrate content, divided by 100.

For example:

- + The GI of a watermelon is 72 but its GL is only 2 per 100g of serving.
- + The GI of a carrot is 92 but its GL is only 6.

So, it is safe to say that watermelon and carrot can be consumed in moderation.

With the glycaemic load, it provides you a full picture on how much your food affects your blood sugar and how much glucose per serving it can deliver.

- + **High GL foods >20:** Cornflakes, cookies, chocolate bars, sodas, candies, rice crackers
- + **Moderate GL foods 11-19:** Fruit juice, plain chocolate, breakfast cereals, muesli, muffins, rice cake and water crackers
- + **Low GL foods <10:** Most fruits and vegetables, digestives and coconut sugar

Low GI and low GL foods consist of mostly unprocessed foods like fruits, vegetables and wholegrains. These foods are high in fibre content that may be helpful in keeping your blood sugar levels under control. Refer to the 'Food Groups' table for examples of low GL carbohydrates.

Observing balance of portions of these foods is also key, which will touch upon more in week 5.

