

# Ask Dr. Tastebud



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*Dear Dr. Tastebud,  
I have noticed the terms “Glycemic Index” and “Glycemic Load” gaining popularity recently. I was wondering what these terms mean and if they are something I should be concerned about? Please clear up my confusion!  
Sincerely,  
Going Glycemic*

Dear Going Glycemic,

You are not alone in your confusion; many people are unclear about all the fuss regarding the Glycemic Index. The Glycemic Index simply determines how high your blood sugar rises after eating a meal. It uses a 50 g serving of white bread as a reference. Foods with a high glycemic index (GI), such as bread, baked potatoes or sugary beverages, are absorbed into the body faster than a low GI food, causing blood sugar levels to peak more quickly.

Low GI foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans are absorbed more slowly by the body, resulting in lower blood sugar and insulin peaks.

## **Who Benefits from a low Glycemic Index Diet?**

Low-glycemic index diets have been found to be beneficial to persons with diabetes and high blood triglycerides because the diet decreases blood sugar and triglyceride levels. Research shows that there is a strong connection between

high blood sugar and insulin levels immediately after eating to diabetes, heart diseases, and obesity.

## **Other Benefits of a Low-GI Diet**

Research also suggests that low glycemic index diets may encourage weight loss. Studies have shown that overweight individuals following a low glycemic index diet lost about 2 pounds more and decreased their “bad” (LDL) cholesterol levels. According to the study, the obese subjects lost, on average, over 9 pounds, compared to only 2-3 pounds lost by people on other diets.

## **What About the Glycemic Load?**

Although there have been many positive results, it is still controversial whether low GI foods lead to weight loss, lower blood sugar levels, or reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer compared with high GI foods.

A weakness of the glycemic index is that it does not consider the amount of carbohydrates per serving, which can mean that some healthy foods have a high GI. Someone on a low GI diet may mistakenly eliminate healthy, low calorie foods based on the glycemic index. However, the glycemic load makes it easy to compare the effect certain foods have on blood sugar because it considers the amount of carbohydrate in the food.