

WHY GLYCEMIC INDEX (GI) &
GLYCEMIC LOAD (GL) ARE
IMPORTANT FOR WEIGHT LOSS



A Guide to GI & GL

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"Food is a pleasure. Nobody deserves to be on a diet."

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Introduction

You always thought calories in and calories out were the main players in weight loss management. Recently you've heard more about the terms *glycemic Index (GI)* and *glycemic Load (GL)* and how they are more important than counting calories. You may have tried to do some research but found it confusing and difficult to understand. You are probably lost.

Don't worry! GI and GL are not simple terms to explain or understand, and there are many misconceptions around them. Those terms are often difficult to understand and therefore hard to apply. That's why I have written this guide. I am here to help you!

Here is an example of the GI and GL knowledge you'll be ready to apply after reading this guide:

Question: I always thought lentils (in fact, all beans and legumes) would make me fat. Why are they a good choice when I want to lose weight?

Answer: Lentils have a low GI (32) and GL (<10).

So what? What does that mean?

Let's learn about it.

GI & GL for Weight Loss Management in Ten Points

By controlling your *glycemic index* (GI) and *glycemic load* (GL), you will be able to **maintain low and steady blood glucose levels without making a huge impact in your insulin levels.**

Trust me, this is one the most important aspects you should control when you are trying to learn how to lose and maintain weight. Glucose and insulin peaks are responsible for making you feel irritable and unstopably hungry in the short term. In the long term, they will affect your hormonal equilibrium (essential for weight maintenance. I'll cover the topic of "hormone balance" in another e-book).

Glycemic Index (GI)

- 1. Glycemic Index is a measure of the effect of a specific carbohydrate on your blood glucose. Knowing a food's GI will help you keep sugar levels under control.**

As Dr. Jenny Brand-Miller and her coauthors write in *The Low GI Shopper's Guide to GI Values*,

"Carbohydrates that break down slowly, releasing glucose gradually into the bloodstream, have a low GI."

2. GI is classified as follows:

- **High = GI > 70**
- **Medium = 69 > GI > 56**
- **Low = GI < 55**

3. Foods with a low GI cause blood glucose to rise gently and therefore do not activate a high insulin response.

Examples of carbohydrates with a low GI are vegetables (with the exception of all types of potatoes, and some sweet potatoes depending how they are cooked), and cereal grains like barley, bulgur, quinoa, and rye.

Foods with more soluble fiber, like beans, apples, and oats, have a lower GI. Although some of these foods can be relatively higher or lower in calories than some other foods, they keep the insulin response under control, which reduces your cravings for more sugar and keeps you feeling full longer.

4. On the other hand, carbohydrates with high GI cause a high increase in glucose, with the subsequent high-insulin response in the body.

Examples of carbohydrates with a high GI are table sugar, most breads, potatoes, and rice.

The high levels of released insulin work hard to reduce the high glucose levels in blood as soon as possible. This causes a sudden drop of glucose, which will make you feel an immediate craving for sugar and an increase in your appetite. This is the body's way of recovering normal glucose to feed your brain and other organs as soon as possible.

Tip: Try to avoid those high GI carbohydrates, and at least make sure that whenever you eat them, you at least accompany them with protein and fat in the same meal to reduce the glucose and therefore the insulin peak.

5. Here are a few more examples of food in each GI category:

- **High:** white bread, white rice, potato, rice milk, rice crackers, watermelon
- **Medium:** raisins, cantaloupe, brown rice, sweet potato, ice cream, orange juice
- **Low:** Whole-grain bread, most fresh fruits, beans, yogurt, orange, wheat pasta, all nuts, most fruits and vegetables

An interesting point to consider is how different types of breads and rice fall into different classifications. The more fiber (especially soluble fiber) a food contains—examples include grain bread, brown rice, and beans—the lower the GI. While oranges are considered low in GI, orange juice falls in the medium category because the fiber is removed when juicing.

Glycemic Load (GL)

6. The Glycemic Load (GL) of food also estimates how much a food will raise a your blood glucose level.

Unlike the Glycemic Index, which measures the “quality” of the carbohydrate, GL accounts for the amount of carbohydrate in the food. Glycemic load is defined as the grams of available carbohydrate in the food multiplied by the food’s GI divided by 100.

7. GL is classified as follows:

- **High = $GL > 20$**
- **Medium = $19 > GL > 11$ Medium**
- **Low = $GL < 10$**

8. Here are a few examples of food in each GL category:

- **High:** pasta, couscous, white rice, potato, corn flakes.
- **Medium:** banana, sweet potato, wild rice, orange juice.
- **Low:** Watermelon, beans, orange, nuts, most fresh fruits and vegetables.

9. It is even possible for a food with a high GI to have a low GL.

For example, watermelon has a high GI (73), but a typical serving of watermelon does not actually contain much available carbohydrate (only 5 grams), so the glycemic effect of eating it (and therefore its GL) is low:

$$73 \times 5 / 100 = 3.65$$

In contrast, even though white and whole wheat breads have a similar high GI and high GL, and whole grain breads have low GI and low GL, all types of bread have a similar quantity of carbohydrates. Therefore, the GL value depends basically on the GI value, so their classifications as low, medium, or high don't change when calculating GL using the GI.

On the other hand, pasta has a low GI (52), mainly because of the soluble fiber it contains, but because it has a high content of carbohydrate and we eat a lot in a serving, its GL is high (23).

10. This is why you should consider not only the GI value of a food, but you should check its GL value, too.

Although the glycemic index is defined for each type of food, the glycemic load is calculated based on the serving size—of a food, an entire meal, or an entire day's worth of meals. Remember, the GL depends on the grams of carbohydrates consumed.

Trying to learn and remember not only the GI but also the GL can be very time consuming, so my recommendation is that you go through the list of the GI and GL of foods you consume more often and write down (and try to remember) the ones that are not consistent. For example:

- Pasta has a low GI but a high GL.
- Banana has a low GI but a medium GL.
- Watermelon has a high GI but a low GL.

A note of caution with GL: the value is calculated using one serving size of the food but in many occasions you end eating more than one serving, especially foods like breakfast cereals, cookies and crackers.

It is very important that you know you can't simply calculate a food's GI. As David Mendosa writes on his [website](#), those are values calculated in the laboratory considering many variables and are based on the quality of the carbohydrates, not the quantity.

Visit <http://www.32mondays.com/blog/gi-gl/> for more detail about GI and GL.

Also, check the University of Sydney, Australia, for detailed information on GI and GL: <http://www.glycemicindex.com>.

And for a handy list of the GI and GL of 100 common foods, visit:

http://www.health.harvard.edu/healthy-eating/glycemic_index_and_glycemic_load_for_100_foods

Recommendations

- Go ahead and eat your lentils: they have a low GI (32) and GL (<10). But remember to follow the recommended portion size (1 tennis ball size)!
- Pay attention to the GI and GL of the food you are consuming. Stay as much as possible with those that have low values (fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, whole grain bread, yogurt) and try to avoid food with high values (potatoes, rice, white bread, pasta, sugars).
- Learn as much as possible about the GI and GL of the foods you eat most, and learn how to make smart changes that will make a very important and positive impact in your efforts to lose weight. For example, eat whole grain bread instead of white or whole wheat bread.
- Even if you don't know the GI value your specific brand or the one you would like to start using, think about how you can estimate that value by applying all the concepts you have just learned.

For example, when looking for a breakfast cereal brand, try to choose one with low sugar content and with soluble fiber. If soluble fiber is not specified, remember that oats and apples are rich in soluble fiber and as a result the GI value will be lower than in other brands.

- Remember to maintain the recommended portion sizes, especially for all the foods with high GI like cookies, rice, potatoes, and white bread.

- Don't forget that pasta is tricky. While the GI value is low, the GL is high, so you need to keep the serving size as small as possible.
- Finally, while glycemic index and glycemic load are good reference values to determine the glucose impact (and therefore the insulin response) a food creates, they can't be considered alone for weight loss management purposes. Calories, portion sizes, types of fat, natural vs. manufactured products, and number and organization of meals, as well as sleep and exercise, are other important considerations.

Your Weight Loss Management

Weight loss management can be overwhelming. You probably know some of the basic concepts, but you don't have time to research for more. Also, you might have tried several diets that didn't work and need help and tips to go ahead and finally lose weight. There are things you simply MUST know and understand if you want to lose weight; other aspects are just not as important. Don't waste time focusing on unimportant information; let me help you learn how to lose weight the easy way.

This is what I do in my 32 Mondays Weight Loss Management method. I explain what is really important to know, and I teach you how to apply those essential concepts through a very structured method. I also give you tips, ideas, lifestyle concepts, recipes, and much more so you can incorporate your weight loss management life into your daily routine. Remember:

"Food is a pleasure. Nobody deserves to be on a diet."

While learning how to manage your weight, you should consider all the other aspects and conditions explained and covered in the 32 Mondays Weight Management Method.

For a more information and helpful tips, visit <http://www.32mondays.com>.

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Website of David Mendosa: <http://mendosa.com>

Website of University of Sydney, Australia: <http://www.glycemicindex.com>

About the Author

Arantxa Mateo is the founder of **32 Mondays® Weight Loss Management**.

A trained biologist from Barcelona, Spain, she was raised by a mother who overfed her (her mother had suffered post-Spanish Civil War famine trauma), and as a child, she was always overweight from simply eating too much.

As a teenager, Arantxa discovered she could take control of what and when to eat. That's when she decided to study biology to learn as much as possible about the science of life and its relation to nutrition and weight loss management.

After her arrival in the United States, Arantxa realized her two daughters were growing up in a society that needed to redefine its relationship with food. Her passion for helping others to create a better relationship with food and exercise became the impetus to develop the

[32 Mondays® Weight Loss Management Program](#).

