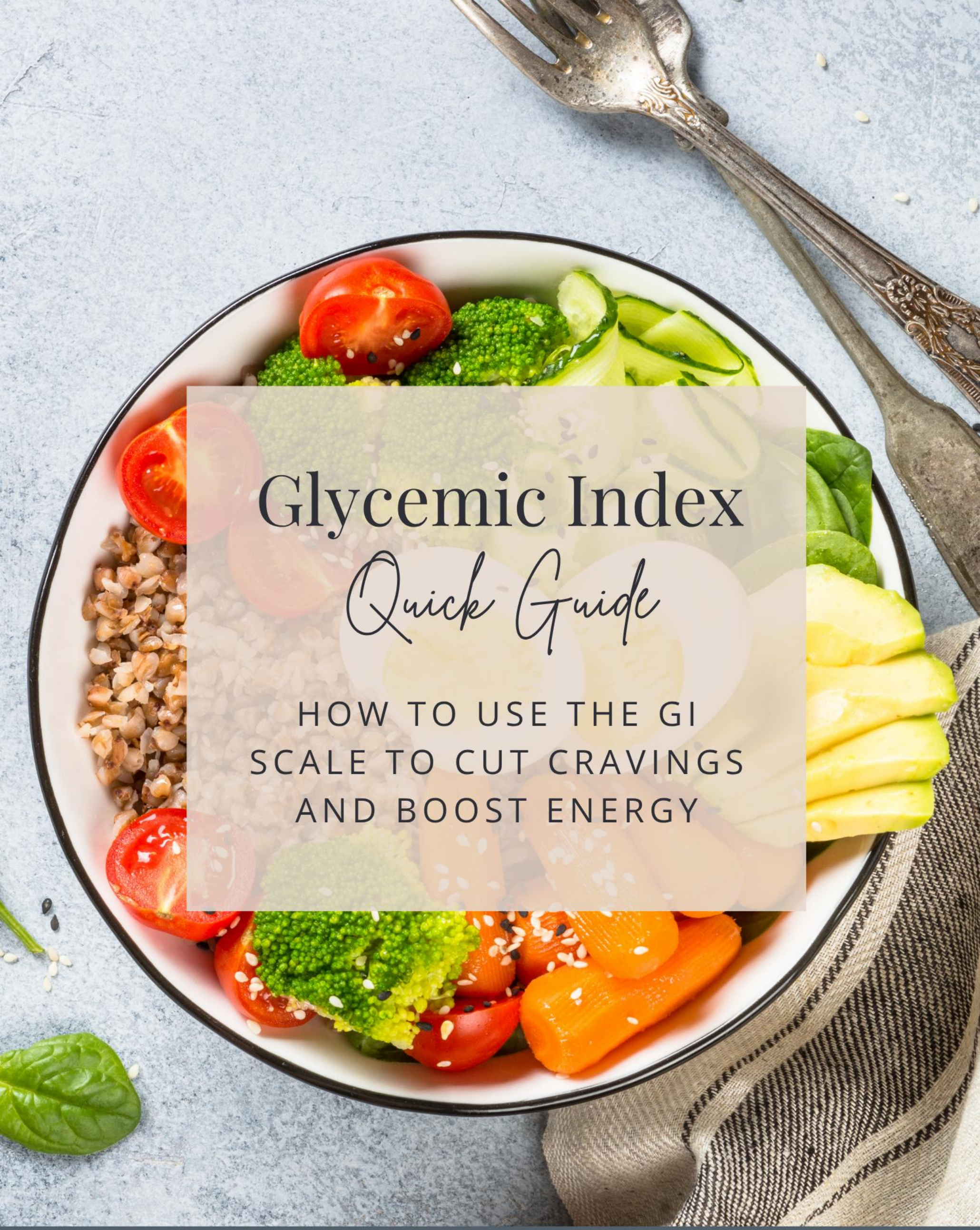


Glycemic Index

Quick Guide

HOW TO USE THE GI SCALE TO CUT CRAVINGS AND BOOST ENERGY

THE GLYCEMIC INDEX

What is it?

Ever feel great after a meal, only to crash an hour later and crave something sweet? Your blood sugar may be riding a rollercoaster. And the glycemic index can help smooth it out.

What is the Glycemic Index?

The glycemic index (GI) is a **measure of how quickly carbohydrate containing foods raise your blood sugar**. The scale goes from 0 to 100. The higher the number, the quicker the glucose spike:

- **Low GI foods (0-55):** slower more stable rise
- **Medium GI foods (56-69):** moderate rise
- **High GI foods (70+):** quick spike

For example, a bowl of steel-cut oats (low GI) raises your blood sugar more gently than a bagel (high GI).



Why the Glycemic Index Matters

Choosing lower GI foods more often helps stabilize your blood sugar, which can help:

- ✔️ Promote steady energy
- ✔️ Reduce cravings
- ✔️ Enhance focus and mood
- ✔️ Balance hormones like insulin & cortisol
- ✔️ Improve metabolism

GLYCEMIC INDEX VS. LOAD

What's the difference?

Not all carbs affect your body the same, even if they have the same GI score. That's where glycemic load (GL) comes in. GL tends to give a more accurate picture of how a food affects your blood sugar. Here's how the two compare:

Glycemic Index (GI)	Glycemic Load (GL)
Rates carbs by how quickly they raise blood sugar	Rates carbs by their GI + the amount of carbohydrates per serving
Doesn't account for portion size	Does take portion size into account

What Affects Glycemic Load?

Serving Size

Larger portions of carbs equal a higher glycemic load.

Ripeness

Ripe fruit has a higher GL than unripe fruit. For example, yellow bananas have a higher GL than green ones.

Cooking Methods

Longer cook times and high-temperature methods like roasting increase GL. Shorter cook times and gentler methods like steaming reduce it.

Food Processing

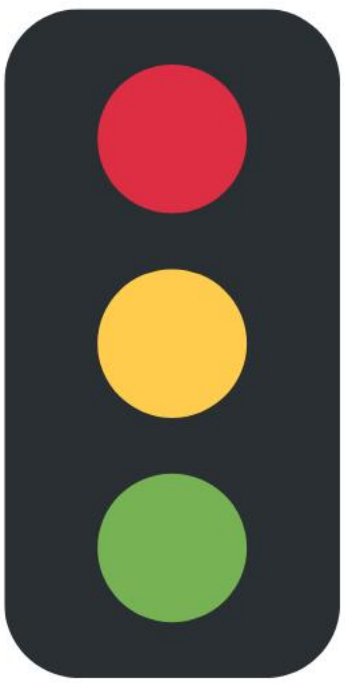
Highly refined or processed foods (e.g., white flour) tend to have a higher GL than whole or minimally processed foods.

GI CATERGORY BASICS

What to know

You don't need to memorize every food's GI score. Just get familiar with the three basic tiers.

Low GI Foods (55 or less)	Medium GI Foods (56-69)	High GI Foods (70 and over)
Raise blood sugar slowly and steadily	Cause a moderate rise in blood sugar	Spike blood sugar quickly
EXAMPLES: Non-starchy vegetables Beans Lentils Quinoa Steel cut oats Nuts & seeds Many fruits (berries, apples, pears, cherries, peaches, citrus) Avocado	**EXAMPLES:** White potatoes Sweet potatoes Corn Brown rice Rolled oats Some fruits (bananas, mango, pineapple)	**EXAMPLES:** Soda Fruit juice White rice White bread Instant oats Processed foods made from white flour (crackers, cookies, bagels, cereal, cake, etc.) Watermelon



The Traffic Light Model

One easy way to remember these categories is to think of a traffic light:

- 🔴 **Red (high GI) =** Caution, eat least often
- 🟡 **Yellow (medium GI)** = Slow, eat less often
- 🟢 **Green (low GI)** = GO, eat these most often

The foods you pair with carbs also have a huge impact on how your body responds to meals. Let's cover that next!

HOW TO LOWER GL OF MEALS

Top Tips

Add Fiber

Fiber slows digestion and glucose absorption. This reduces the blood sugar spike from carbs and a meal's overall GL.

Ideas: leafy greens, non-starchy veggies, flaxseed, chia seeds, beans/legumes



Include Healthy Fats

Fats also slow glucose absorption. Pair them with carbs to lower a meal's GL.

Ideas: avocado, nuts, seeds, olive oil, coconut milk, nut butter



Pair with Protein

Protein-rich foods are a smart pair for carbs, too. They help create a more gradual rise in glucose.

Ideas: eggs, chicken, salmon, Greek yogurt, tofu, edamame, beef, lentils



Add acid

A splash of acid can slow how quickly carbs are digested, reducing a meal's glucose spike.

Ideas: vinegar, lemon juice, pickled vegetables



SMART MEAL PAIRINGS

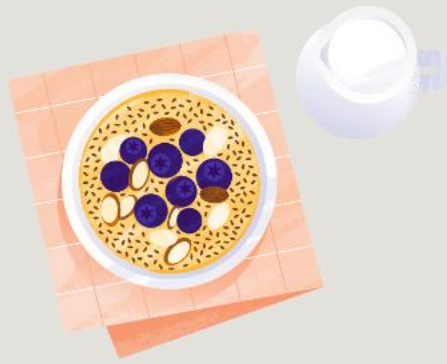
To lower glycemic load

Need some examples on how put this into action? Here are a few before and after meal pairings for better blood sugar balance:

Breakfast

Before: Instant oatmeal + banana + orange juice

After: Steel cut oats + blueberries (fiber) + chia seeds (protein) + almond butter (fat)



Lunch

Before: White bread turkey sandwich + chips

After: Sprouted grain turkey wrap (protein) with avocado (fat) + veggie sticks + hummus (fiber)



Dinner

Before: White pasta with marinara sauce + garlic bread

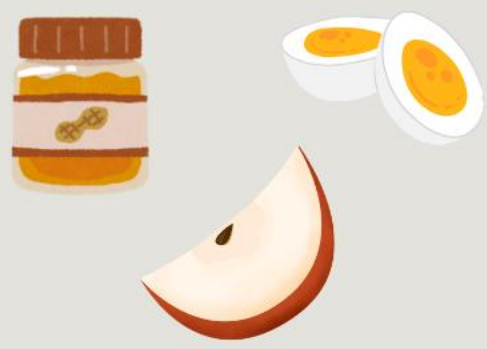
After: Chickpea pasta + meatballs (protein) + green salad (fiber) w/olive oil apple cider vinaigrette (fat + acid)



Snack

Before: Granola bar + dried fruit

After: Hard boiled egg (protein) + apple slices (fiber) + peanut butter (fat)



WHY MOVEMENT MATTERS

For blood sugar balance

A quick post-meal walk can do wonders for your blood sugar. *Why?*

Your muscles use glucose for energy. When you move, **your muscles soak glucose up from your bloodstream** like a sponge.

This lowers your blood sugar and helps smooth out spikes, especially after carb-heavy meals.



Even a Few Minutes Helps

No need for a full workout. Even light movement for 5-15 minutes can improve glucose regulation and support insulin sensitivity.

For the best benefits, aim to get moving within 5-30 minutes after finishing a meal.

Quick Post-Meal Movement Ideas

- Go for a quick 5-15 minute walk
- Do light housework or tidy the kitchen
- Walk up and down a flight of stairs a few times
- Do 30 squats
- Stretch while watching TV
- Play with your kids or pets
- Have a post-meal dance party to a few songs



GLYCEMIC INDEX
Cheat sheet

Top takeaways to help balance your blood sugar:

- **Eat lower GI foods most often.** Choose foods like non-starchy veggies, berries, quinoa, lentils, and steel cut oats.

- **Pair carbs wisely.** Pair carbs with protein, fiber, or fat (or all three!) to slow digestion and smooth spikes.

- **Watch your portions.** Even healthy carbs can raise your blood sugar if the serving size is too big.

- **Limit processed foods.** Whole and minimally processed foods are gentler on your blood sugar than refined foods.

- **Add a splash of acid.** Squeeze lemon on meals, use a vinaigrette dressing, or drink 1 tbsp of apple cider vinegar in water before eating to lower a meal's glycemic impact.

- **Avoid overcooking starches.** Al dente pasta and firm grains are digested more slowly than overcooked ones.

- **Move after meals.** Just 5-15 minutes of walking or light movement can reduce a meal's glucose spike.