Following Glycemic Index Is Not a Good "Weigh"

Diet News Flash

The glycemic index (GI) is a measure of how high blood sugar levels rise when people consume about 50 grams of carbohydrate from various foods. The GI is useful for people with diabetes to help them predict the effect a food or meal will have on their blood sugar levels. It ranks individual foods on a scale of 1-100 relative to the impact of pure glucose, which has a GI of 100.

The glycemic index has become the centerpiece of fad diet books such as The Zone, The South Beach Diet, Atkins Diet Revolution and Sugar Busters. It has re-cently received media attention from the Associated Press in an article titled, "Good Carb, Bad Carb."

We decided to ask our nutrition scientist, James Kenney, PhD, RD, LD, FACN, for his opinion on using the glycemic index as a weight loss tool. Dr. Kenney advises, "The GI indexis not really a good tool for weight loss because there is a drawback to using it exclusively for this purpose. Foods that are higher in fat, such as meat, chocolate and nuts, take longer to digest. Their impact on blood sugar levels is less and they have a lower GI. But, higher fat consumption has clearly been linked with excessive calorie intake and weight gain.

The bottom line:
Forget about using the glycemic index for weight control and focus on eating more lowfat foods that have a high fiber and high moisture content. These include fruits, vegetables, cooked whole grains (such as brown rice, oatmeal, barley and whole wheat), and legumes/beans. Foods such as white breads, baked goods, cookies, crackers and chips as well as foods with a lot of fat and/or sugar have little fiber and provide less satiety per calorie.

Further reading:
www.foodandhealth.com – Click on CPE courses in the top orange bar and then scroll down to Weight Loss for an article titled, "Do High Glycemic Index Foods Cause Obesity?"

Example #1 – M&Ms versus baked potatoes:
If we took only the glycemic index into consideration, we would be tempted to assume that it is better to eat Peanut M&M candies (33) than baked potatoes (67). However, Peanut M&M candies contain more fat and much less fiber per calorie than a baked potato (with lowfat toppings). You would have to eat many more calories of M&Ms versus baked potato calories to feel satiated.

Example #2 – Snapple versus an orange:
Although an orange (43) is double the score of Snapple (20) it is a much better nutritional choice because the Snapple contains no fiber and fructose, which has been shown to raise triglycerides and "bad" cholesterol. By contrast, the orange has a very high satiety value and slightly lowers "bad" cholesterol due to its soluble fiber. It is also rich in potassium and many other nutrients.

Glycemic Index

Here is a sample of foods listed on the glycemic index. Foods that score low generally have less sugar and more fiber. But high-fat foods or drinks with fructose may appear low, too.

Food	Index score
black beans	30
Peanut M&Ms	33
Snickers bar	41
oatmeal	48
carrots	49
corn	56
white rice	58
beets	64
pea soup	66
baked potato	67
bagel	72
pretzels	83
corn flakes	83
glucose	*100*

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