

# The G.I. Diet: A healthy way to eat

by Louise Huneault

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**T**HE G.I. DIET IS about much more than losing weight; it's a guide to healthy eating. Developed by Dr. David Jenkins, a nutritionist at the University of Toronto, the **Glycemic index (G.I.)** categorizes food in terms of how quickly it produces a rise in blood sugar. The Dietitians of Canada recommend using the G.I. index in meal planning for individuals with diabetes.

Foods that are rich in carbohydrates are broken down by the body to make glucose (or sugar), the body's main source of fuel. As a result, our blood sugar rises after a meal. The speed at which glucose is released into the blood is called the "glycemic response." Foods that have a higher G.I. rating are broken down quickly, produce a rapid but short-lived increase and tend to leave you feeling hungry again in no time. On the other hand, foods with a lower G.I. rating raise blood sugar more slowly and leave you feeling fuller, longer.

A G.I. of 55 or less is considered low; a G.I. of 56 to 69 ranks as medium; and a G.I. of 70 or more ranks as high. Luckily, you don't have to fuss with making these calculations. The G.I. diet plan lists foods in one of three categories based on the colours of a traffic light. Foods listed in the red or "stop" zone have a high G.I. rating and should be avoided. These include things like white bread, cakes and cookies. Foods in the yellow or "caution" zone, like bananas and unsweetened fruit juice, have a moderate G.I. rating. Foods in the green or "go ahead" zone, such as chickpeas and brown rice, have a low G.I. rating and promote weight loss.

## NO CARB VS. GOOD CARB

A well-balanced diet rich in vegetables and fruit, beans and legumes, lean meats and fish, and low-fat dairy foods is best for good health. Unlike low-carb diets like Atkins, the G.I. diet plan doesn't eliminate all carbohydrates. Instead, it encourages eating the "right carbs" — those that will help keep your blood glucose steady and control your appetite. Eating foods that have a low

G.I. rating has other benefits too. They tend to be lower in calories and fat and are typically higher in fibre, nutrients and antioxidants. Low G.I. foods may also help you to:

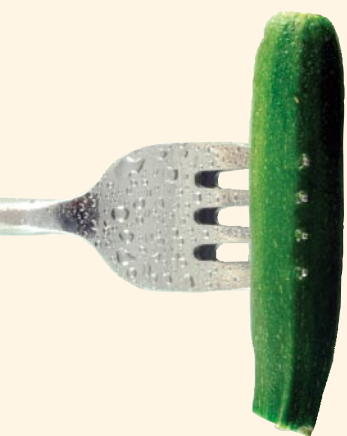
- control your blood sugar, cholesterol and appetite
- reduce your risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes

## WEIGHT LOSS

For those interested in losing weight, the G.I. Diet is divided into two phases. Phase I is the weight-loss component of the diet and the focus is on choosing foods from the green, "go-

## LOW G.I. FOOD GUIDE

- Drink water, club soda, diet soft drinks and skim milk
- Choose whole grain, high-fibre breads
- Eat low-fat or fat-free cheese and yogurt
- Limit fat intake and use canola oil, olive oil, fat-free dressings and soft, non-hydrogenated light margarines
- Choose lean cuts of beef, skinless chicken and extra lean ground beef
- Eat plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit in the green zone like tomatoes, zucchini, radishes, peas, apples, berries, peaches, plums, pears and oranges
- Eat more beans, legumes and lentils





# Green bean and chickpea salad

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

**DRESSING**

- ½ c. (125 g) non-fat yogurt
- 2 tbsp. (30 mL) low-fat mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp. (30 mL) orange juice concentrate, thawed
- ½ tsp. (2.5 mL) sweet paprika
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp. (10 mL) sugar substitute
- ¼ tsp. (1.25 mL) ground ginger
- ⅛ tsp. (.625 mL) red pepper flakes
- zest of 1 orange
- pinch of Kosher salt
- fresh ground pepper to taste

**SALAD**

- 1 19 oz. (540 mL) can of chickpeas, rinsed and well drained
- 1 lb. (450 g) green beans, washed, trimmed and cut on the diagonal
- 2 oranges, peeled and cut into segments
- ½ small red onion, sliced (optional)
- Boston Bibb lettuce leaves, washed and spun dry

For dressing, whisk all ingredients to combine. Set aside until ready to serve.  
 For salad, steam-cook green beans until crisp tender, about 2-3 minutes. Refresh under cold water and drain well. In large bowl, carefully combine chickpeas, beans, onion (if using) and orange segments. Add salad dressing and carefully toss to coat.  
 To serve, place lettuce leaves on serving plates. Divide salad evenly among lettuce leaves.

**TIPS:** Use your hands to carefully toss the salad with the dressing — serving utensils tend to crush the delicate chickpeas. If you have time, let the salad dressing stand, in a sealed container in the refrigerator, for 1 hour before serving to allow the flavors to blend. For a different take on this recipe, substitute the chickpeas with white kidney beans or black beans and substitute the green beans with asparagus when in season.

Approximately per serving:	
Calories	247
Protein	10.3 g
Fat (Saturated fat)	4.2 g (0.9 g)
Carbohydrates	45.2 g
Fibre	8.7 g
Sodium	375 mg
Cholesterol	3 mg

ahead” zone. At this stage, foods with a low G.I. value that are high in fat — whole milk and chocolate, for example — are also limited. Once your target weight is achieved, you enter Phase II, where higher G.I. foods can be gradually reintroduced to maintain a healthy weight. If losing weight is not important but you want to use the G.I. diet to help you eat well, you can start at Phase II of the diet.

For a taste of what’s in store, try this refreshing summer salad. Delicious as a main course or side dish, it includes “go-ahead” green zone favourites like chickpeas, seasonal green beans, onions, lettuce and oranges.  
 For more information on books, recipes and guides for shopping and eating out, visit [www.gidiet.com](http://www.gidiet.com).