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...TO GET MORE OUT OF YOUR DIET PLATE

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Put simply, the **glycemic index** is an indicator of the rate at which a carbohydrate containing food affects blood glucose levels.

'glyc' refers to glucose

'emic' refers to blood

'index' refers to an indicator.....

Thus the **glycemic index** is a blood glucose indicator, with numerical values from 1 - 100.

To test the GI of everyday foods, trained volunteers eat a given portion of the test food and monitor their blood glucose levels every 30 minutes after eating the test food. This is recorded to show the effect of the food eaten on their blood glucose levels. The test results are then compared to the effect pure glucose had on their blood glucose levels, and the ratio of the test food over the glucose is the glycemic index. It is thus a **real** response by the body to food eaten.

Foods that are absorbed very quickly have a high glycemic index (high GI), and those that are absorbed slowly and steadily over about three hours have a low GI. It makes sense then, that low GI foods (slow release carbohydrates) would have a much less marked effect on blood glucose levels than a high GI food (fast release carbohydrates).

For example:

Standard South African bread has a high GI of 72 - 81 and baked beans have a low GI of 48. This means that the glucose in the bread would be digested and absorbed faster, and gives a sharper and quicker rise in blood glucose than the baked beans. All high GI foods are digested and absorbed very quickly and thus give a steep rise in blood glucose levels.