

Low Gi Diet or Low Carb Diet - Which One Is Best?

These days, most everyone has heard of low carb diets such as the South Beach and Atkins diet but the GI or glycemic index diet is a fairly new name on the diet scene. While low carb diets restrict the quantity of carbohydrates, the GI diet focuses on the quality of carbohydrates. It works by promoting the consumption of foods that are low on the glycemic index, foods which will have a gently effect on your blood sugar levels and keep you full longer. A typical low carb diet, has a restrictive phase in the beginning where your carbohydrate intake is severely limited. You can eat all the meat you want and fats are also unlimited, although the South Beach Diet does encourage you to stick to low fat meats and healthy fats. As the diet progresses, you can gradually add in more carbohydrates, typically those with a low glycemic index are also those that are lower in carbs. Although a low GI diet might not be one that you've heard much about before, it has actually been around since the 1970's and is used in many European countries to help manage diabetes. Recently, however, this way of eating has gotten a lot of attention as a healthy way to control weight. This diet focuses on carbohydrates - "good carbs" have a low glycemic index and you should eat plenty of them (incidentally, these are also the foods that we know to be good for us like fruits, vegetables and whole grains). "Bad carbs" have a high glycemic index and should be eaten in moderation and mixed with the low glycemic index carbs to lower the overall GI of a meal. Since this diet focuses only on carbs it is very easy for vegetarians to adopt this way of eating. In comparison, a low carb diet can be limiting in fruits and vegetables which are high in vitamins, minerals and enzymes as well as fiber. Many people associate low carb diets with a license to eat as much saturated fat as you want, but that choice is up to the individual so we really can't fault the diet for this misconception. A low GI diet is full of fruits, vegetables, fiber and low in fat but emphasis the good fats found in nuts. It encourages eating lean meats in moderation. While we all know that meats and fats are no carb and green leafy vegetables are low carb, some may not be aware of what foods have a low glycemic index. Most vegetables (except potatoes, beets, pumpkin) have a very low GI. Some fruits that have a low GI include citrus fruits, apples, plums and peaches while most other fruits have a medium GI value. Oatmeal, most pasta and whole wheat bread also have a low gi. So which diet is best? Where many people in the health and nutrition profession consider a low carb diet to be unhealthy, most everyone would consider a gi diet to be very healthy. Studies have shown that eating lots of fruits and vegetables can help to bolster your immune system thus allowing you to fight disease and eating high fat meats may adversely affect your health and help contribute to heart disease. That being said, it has also been shown that being overweight is a major health risk for many diseases so the best diet is probably one that works for you! Some folks might respond better to a low carb, others to a low gi. Either way, it makes sense to make healthy food choices, limit food intake and exercise for your good health.

About the Author

Diet and Nutrition. Explore more than 70 nutrition topics ranging from vitamins and minerals, to additives in food, school lunches, vegetarianism, and more.

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