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Understanding the Glycemic Index

If you have not already read about the glycemic index in the media, you probably will. It is a numerical index given to a carbohydrate-rich food that is based on the average increase in blood glucose levels occurring after the food is eaten. It is derived from the word 'glycemia', which means the presence of glucose (or sugar) in the blood.

The importance of understanding the meaning of this term is the key to maintaining your healthiest weight possible.

There are 2 types of carbohydrates: high-glycemic response carbohydrates and low-glycemic response carbohydrates. Every time you consume a high-glycemic response (insulin-inducing) carbohydrate, your blood glucose level skyrockets. In response, your body secretes insulin to lower the blood glucose level, causing a glycemic roller coaster effect as blood glucose levels move from high to low.

What this really means to you is that when your body is in the high-glycemic response you will store fat; when you are in the low-glycemic response, you will burn fat. This is because your body can't just leave excess glucose lying around, so your body converts it to fat and stores it!

Examples of high-glycemic response carbohydrates you should avoid are foods like pasta made from white flour, white breads, white rice, cookies, cakes and high sugar cereals.

Examples of low-glycemic response carbohydrates you could switch to include foods like whole wheat pasta, whole wheat bread, brown rice, and high fibre unsweetened cereals.

As you can imagine, learning what the low-glycemic foods are is essential for people with diabetes or high blood glucose levels. But it is equally important for those of us trying to maintain a healthy weight.

Weight management programs that focus on low glycemic foods are the most successful as they teach you how to eat for a lifetime of healthy weight management and will help reduce your risk of disease.

In Good Health, Christine Maiorano