

# To track carbs, tap into the glycemic index and its cousin

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(HealthDay)—Rather than just counting carbs, you might want to get

familiar with the glycemic index and the glycemic load, numeric weighting systems that rank carb-based foods based on how much they raise blood sugar.

While monitoring these indicators might be especially helpful for those with [diabetes](#), they also can be useful tools to keep others from developing diabetes and even lower the risk of heart disease, especially for women and for people who are overweight.

The glycemic index is the better known of the two. It's a measure of the blood glucose-raising potential of carbohydrate foods compared to a reference food, like pure glucose or a slice of white bread.

The glycemic load goes one step further. It takes into account both the types of carbs in a food and the amount of carbs in a serving. The lower a food's glycemic load, the less it affects [blood sugar](#) and insulin levels.

A [food](#)'s glycemic load gives you a more exact measurement than the glycemic index alone because even though most healthy foods are both low-glycemic index and low-glycemic load, a few higher [glycemic index](#) foods—like bananas, pineapples and watermelon—actually have low-to-moderate glycemic loads and can fit into many diets. That's important because those three fruits in particular deliver many important nutrients.

Lowering the glycemic load of your diet happens naturally when you increase your intake of whole grains, nuts, legumes, fruits and non-starchy vegetables, and decrease foods like potatoes, white bread and sugary treats.

Using the glycemic indexes will help you refine your choices as you take steps to improve your [diet](#).

**More information:** To help you further understand the impact of

foods on blood sugar, check out the [glycemic index and glycemic load](#) page on the website of the Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University.

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