

## How to Get Your Diabetes Patients Started with Low Glycemic Index Meal Planning Eight Easy Steps

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March 14, 2004

1. Discuss the patient's self monitoring blood glucose (BG) numbers:
  - Explain reference ranges for fasting, before and after meals, and bedtime.
  - Look at the patient's pre- and post-prandial numbers. Consider a post-prandial elevation of approximately 40 points to be a "normal" response.
  - Explain that high post-prandial BG elevations may be due to inadequate and/or inappropriate medication(s) and/or diet.
2. Look at the patient's food journal.
  - Select a very typical day's food intake.
  - Have the patient circle all carbohydrates consumed that day.
3. Relate pre- and post-prandial BG numbers to the carbohydrates consumed at each corresponding meal of the selected day.
  - Have the patient calculate the BG elevations before and after meals.
4. Explain to the patient that there are three macronutrients in the diet: carbohydrate (CHO), protein (PRO), and fat (FAT). Briefly explain their metabolic end products.
  - CHO = 100% glucose, which goes directly into the blood
  - PRO = amino acids + glucose, which goes to the liver
  - FAT = fatty acids + glucose (minimal)
5. Explain to the patient that the post-prandial BG elevations are due primarily to the type (glycemic index value) and amount (glycemic load value) of the carbohydrates that were consumed at that meal.
  - Glycemic index (GI): quickly-digested CHO ("gushers") elevate BG higher and more rapidly than the slowly-digested CHO ("tricklers").
  - Glycemic load (GL): helps to predict the BG response to a particular CHO in a particular given amount in a meal.
6. Give examples of high and low GI carbohydrates.
  - List factors affecting GI values: type of starch and degree of gelatinization or "swelling", physical form, fiber, fat, sugar and acid content.
7. Guide the patient in matching post-prandial BG levels with the GI and the GL of the carbohydrates he/she circled in the food journal.
  - If post-prandial numbers are satisfactory: encourage continued application of CHO choices.
  - If post-prandial numbers are too high: illicit low GI/GL substitutions from the patient; offer suggestions.

8. Summarize at the end of the office visit:

- Carbohydrate intake is primarily responsible for post-prandial BG levels.
- The *type* of CHO as well as the *amount* consumed will determine post-prandial BG levels.
- “Gusher” or high GI CHOs are quickly digested into glucose and will cause a sharp and rapid elevation in BG levels.
- “Trickler” or low GI CHOs are slowly digested and absorbed into the bloodstream and cause a more moderate BG elevation.
- The “glycemic load” or the amount of a particular CHO will help predict the post-prandial BG elevation.
- Review the patient’s current CHO choices.
- Encourage low GI, low GL foods for improved glycemia.