

# Nutrition News

September/October 2008



## Harrisonburg Dietitians, LLC

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### News from the American Dietetic Association's *On the Pulse*

USDA allows soymilk to be served as a milk substitute for school children as part of the national school lunch program at the parents' request starting in October of 2008. The parents will be required to provide written medical proof that the child cannot safely drink regular cow's milk for the school to implement that provision.

### Julie's 2 Cents

If you are looking to try something healthy that still tastes good, try Kashi™ brand products. Kashi™ brand makes items that are high in whole grains and fiber, but do not contain trans fats or hydrogenated oils. You can find them at most major grocery stores. My favorite is the Oatmeal Dark Chocolate Cookies and my kids love the Go Lean™ Blueberry Waffles.

The waffles also contain 4 grams of protein per waffle. If you would like more info about Kashi™ products, visit [www.kashi.com](http://www.kashi.com) or go to <http://www.kashi.com/stealacookie/getmycookie> to get a free sample of my favorite cookie.



7 whole grains on a mission.™

### Understanding the Glycemic Index

Often people will ask us what we think about the glycemic index. My opinion is that it has both positive and negative aspects. Before I tell you what they are, let me explain both how food affects your blood glucose ("sugar") levels and the reasoning behind the glycemic index.

When you eat carbohydrates, your digestive tract breaks it down into glucose. This glucose is then released into the blood stream and commonly called blood glucose or "blood sugar".

There are two types of carbohydrates, **simple carbohydrates**, such as sugar or refined flour, and **complex carbohydrates**, such as whole grains and dried beans or peas. What makes a carbohydrate either simple or complex is how hard the body has to work to break it down to glucose. Simple sugars are broken down very quickly, sometimes before the food even leaves the stomach. Thus, your blood sugar will rise quickly after the food is eaten. On the other hand, complex carbohydrates are harder to digest and need to move further into the intestines to be broken down into glucose. As a result of this delay in digestion, your blood sugar levels rise slower. This slow but steady rise usually results in a lower total effect on your overall blood sugar levels.

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The glycemic index is a ranking of foods based on how high and how quickly they raise blood sugar. Simple carbohydrates will be at the *top* of the glycemic index, whereas complex carbohydrates will be at the *bottom* due to their fiber and/or protein content.

The following list is a general guide to the glycemic index of common foods.

High	Moderate	Low
White flour (found in most breakfast pastries, donuts, muffins, cookies, cakes, strudel, pop tarts, waffles, pancakes, snack cakes, crackers) High fructose corn syrup (found in soda, candy, pastries, breads, sweets, condiments, salad dressing, specialty beverages, juices) Skinless potato products (french fries, potato chips) Russet potatoes Some whole grain products Table sugar	Most whole grains Some refined grains Low-fiber fruits (i.e. bananas)	Beans Nuts Fruits Sweet potatoes Some grain products (i.e. pasta) Vegetables Seeds

What I feel is a negative to the glycemic index is that it is very general. When the glycemic number of each food was determined, the foods were tested using the same volume of food and without any other food item. Most people do not eat the same volume of white flour at one sitting, but that is how the glycemic index of flour was determined. Additionally, what happens if you eat a combination of low and high foods at a meal? Or, what if your meal consists of mostly moderate foods, but you decide to add a tablespoon of sugar to your tea for dessert. As a result, I find this program to be too basic and unrealistic as a sole dietary intervention to control diabetes.

On the positive side, it is a quick and easy way for someone to **START** changing their diet for better blood glucose control. One can see at a glance some common foods that will probably increase blood sugar levels if portions are not controlled.

However, to know what your portions should be or how to correctly combine your foods at meals, you should visit a registered dietitian to get a meal plan specific to your health needs.

If you combine the premise of the glycemic index with a personal meal plan and label reading skills you will have a powerful tool to control your blood glucose levels and weight.