



Healthy results: the Benedet family. Caroline, Aaron and Luciano enjoy a low GI and healthier life

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The index of a happier family

Learning to play the numbers game adds up to a good diet, writes KATE MINOGUE

In the past few months Cary-lee Benedet has transformed the way her family eats and the results have been fascinating. Her teenage sons have enough energy to grow and play sport, her two older children have prolonged concentration spans for study and her husband is losing weight.

The Sydney household of six now eats a low-glycemic diet, choosing foods which have a minimal effect on their blood glucose levels.

The Glycemic Index (GI) is a system of measuring the effect carbohydrates have on blood-glucose levels. Understanding the GI and eating foods with a low GI value can help people lose weight and prevent and control diabetes type 2 and heart disease.

More than 300 products sold in supermarkets now carry the GI symbol. The program was devised to help consumers informed about what they are eating. The foods in the program have been tested for their GI level, they carry the GI symbol and indicate high, medium or low GI ratings.

Legumes and proteins, pasta, slow cooking meats and certain wholegrain breads are examples of foods with low GI values, while white bread, cakes, some large potatoes and jammed tarts have high GI ratings.

It sounds simple enough but the program, devised by Professor Jennie Brand Miller and her colleagues at the University of Sydney, may hold the answer to some of the most serious health problems of our time.

Glycemic index



The GI decides the type of carbohydrate it metabolises to raise blood sugar.

By eating a low GI diet people keep blood sugar levels steady and the mind stays alert, diabetes type 2, heart disease and stroke, low GI foods boost energy and attention spans.

Look for the G symbol. If the food is marked with a G symbol it will indicate the GI value of the item.

A high GI value is 70 or more, a medium GI value is 50 to 69, and a low GI value is 50 or less.

For a low GI diet eat plenty of whole, low GI cereals, more fruit, yogurt, pulses beans and vegetables.

GI values: 4000 yoghurt 33, apples 35, baked beans 48, lentils 35, spaghetti 36, milk 31, (high) white bread 75, baked potato 85

should choose a low GI food for every meal.

"Low GI foods hang around in the gut and they make you feel fuller for longer," she says.

"They're a natural brake on hunger. They reduce the strength, this means the longer your stomach stays full — three hours instead of 20 minutes."

The Benedet family started using the GI after daughter Cary visited diabetes specialist Dr George for advice. Cary had been suffering health problems during the HSC.

Caroline says although her two younger sons both have slim physiques, her two older children and her husband tend to gain weight and she worries a single health problem for the whole family.

"We have been made more aware of what we should be doing for reasons far beyond what we need to do to have good health as we don't have to go to the doctor as often," she says.

"It's really learning to eat a different way."

The GI determines the ra-

te of carbohydrates on a scale from 0 to 100, where pure glucose has a rating of 100 and high GI values 70 and over, have more effect on blood glucose levels than foods with a low GI of 50 or less.

Carbohydrates cause most of the rise in glucose after a meal. The presence of glucose in the blood triggers the pancreas to secrete insulin, which causes the storage and use of glucose by the cells of the body.

High insulin levels turn off the use of fat as fuel and have been shown to interfere with weight loss. If the body constantly demands insulin, it will lose its ability to produce insulin and, in those predisposed, diabetes type 2 can develop.

High blood glucose levels can also damage the heart and circulatory system, lead to heart attacks and possibly certain types of cancer. Over time they can result in skin problems, nerve damage, stroke and loss of circulation which can lead to amputations, blindness and kidney disease.

As the body relies on glucose

for fuel, low blood glucose levels can lead to impaired mental ability or even hypoglycaemia. By understanding the GI people can choose the right amount and type of carbohydrate to stay healthy.

"We have got the perfect GI food levels and we just think it's our legs for when we go shopping. And I have read the GI literature," she says.

The GI symbol makes shopping easy when you're busy, she adds. "We are looking at eating more wholegrain foods, rather than processed foods."

Benedet says she plans to eat only low GI foods for the rest of her life, which can be low meat, fat, or dairy, 40 per cent carbohydrates, and 20 per cent fat.

"We look at eating out, we avoid carbohydrates because they are causing the big problems," she says. "The refined carbohydrates are giving you a high in sugar, they are quick fix, and they don't sustain you. But if you are on the low GI diet you don't need them."

When the children want snacks, Benedet says they have an apple, a banana smoothie made with skim milk or soy milk, banana or eggplant dip with biscuits or a sandwich with gravy bread such as Ryvita.

Benedet says her sons, Dylan, 16, and Aaron, 14, have better attention spans, he school study and have the energy for sport. And her husband Luciano has lost fat.

George says that people should eat low GI foods for five-minute and long-term fuel.

"In raising children you want to provide healthy growth and in the long term you want to prevent health problems that could be associated with weight, and this can be done with a low GI diet," she says.

For more information about the Glycemic Index go to www.glycemicindex.com

what's the alternative

With **Michael Elstein**



My father, who is 90, has had an ulcer on his ankle for about six months and although it has been treated and dressed regularly, it does not appear to be getting better. Could you suggest a possible cure and/or alternative medication for his ulcer?

I have found that regular dressing using a medical honey based formulation called Mederma work exceptionally well to manage these ulcers. Applications of new dressing every second day can lead to dramatic results.

This product was developed by a herbalist of the Central Coast called Denis Stewart.

Companies such as Blackmore and Upton, both based in Sydney, should be able to help you locate this formulation.

My daughter has a bulging disc. I don't know what the medical term for this is. She has had it for a few years. Is there any cure, like an operation?

Your daughter might only need an operation if the bulging disc results in ongoing pain which is interfering with a management or is never leading to discomfort that radiates down her leg.

Herbal treatments such as phytotherapy, chiropractic and osteopathy can prove to be extremely useful for managing this type of problem.

Nutrients such as vitamin C, magnesium, zinc, chondroitin and glucosamine sulphate can help repair damaged cartilage and joint tissue that might be affected.



Herbal remedies for backache include rosemary, alfalfa, ginger and turmeric.

I'm a 45-year-old man who suffers from ligament neuritis. Symptoms on one side of my face and head include headache, pain behind the eyes, sensitive skin, sore throat and slight nausea. Can you suggest any treatment for the condition?

A study reported in the Lancet medical journal demonstrated that only intramuscular injections with vitamin B12 in the form of 1000ug of cyanocobalamin were found to be highly effective administered over a 30-day period.

Other natural remedies that can also be used if the approach is not totally successful include a combination of vitamin B complex and coenzyme Q10 taken orally.

I was wondering if you could suggest any treatment to help my 84-year-old mother. Mum had four bowel operations, not cancer, between 1994 and 1998 and suffers severe pain from adhesions on the bowel whenever she sits or lies down. She also had three cancer operations on her mouth. The radiotherapy following the operations left her with a bottom lip that hangs all day. What do you suggest to help her?

Something very simple, like Borealis ointment, might help relieve the sticking on her lower lip. If the bottom lip has a growth that contains chondroma, osteoma and uterine it might do the trick.

For abdominal pain, Di cherrydione has analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties. Fish oil, stevia, em-bark and boswellia might also help deal.

Dr Elstein is a GP, alternative specialist and the author of *Herbal Health*. Send questions to: What's the Alternative, PO Box 4248, GPO Sydney, NSW 2001. e-mail minogau@dailytelegraph.com.au