

Using the Glycemic Index in Your Food Choices: The NutriSystem Diet

Abstract

The biggest selling point of the NutriSystem diet is the glycemic advantage (GA). I hypothesize that by using the glycemic index scale outside of the NutriSystem diet, the GA can be achieved by preparing fresh foods at home. That GA is based on the incorporation of the glycemic index scale into a weight loss program. However, an important factor that should be incorporated with the glycemic index scale, is the glycemic load scale. The NutriSystem diet does not include this aspect in the diet and consumer success will be greatly affected. Also, people are unaware that they can achieve the same weight loss goals as the NutriSystem diet without actually buying the NutriSystem plan. According to the Canadian Diabetes Association's web site, the glycemic index scale is one that ranks carbohydrate-rich foods by how much they raise blood glucose levels in the body (CDA). The glycemic load scale ranks foods and their effect on the pancreas and heart. As a result of using these scales, people will have a healthier diet and lifestyle.

Introduction

The NutriSystem plan has been incorporating the glycemic index (GI) into consumer's diets. The advertisements have been convincing people that this is the diet that truly works. The NutriSystem diet is a weight loss program that uses carbohydrates ranking the lowest on the glycemic index scale to make people shed unwanted weight. The NutriSystem diet and the glycemic index scale are both healthy ways to lose weight. However, there are still many flaws in the NutriSystem diet. The biggest flaw is not incorporating the glycemic load with the glycemic index. According to nutrition peer-reviewed journals the glycemic index needs to be paired with the glycemic load to have a healthy diet. be achieved with fresh foods, prepared at home, that are tastier, cost less and rank While the NutriSystem diet is potentially effective, the same results can be achieved by eating foods that rank low on the glycemic index and load scales.

The NutriSystem diet's biggest selling point is that it can give you the "Glycemic Advantage" (NutriSystem). But, the glycemic advantage is something that is not hard to achieve. According to the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA), the glycemic index scale is a scale that ranks carbohydrate-rich foods by how much they raise blood glucose levels. Every time you eat, your body has a glycemic response, which is the speed at which the blood glucose levels rise in accordance to the quality of carbohydrates that a person is consuming. To achieve the glycemic advantage, a person would want to choose foods that rank the lowest on the scale. These foods include skim milk, plain yogurt, oat bran bread, firm pasta and lentils/kidney/baked beans (CDA). The NutriSystem web site introduces the glycemic index and how it works for the diet, but they ignore the glycemic load scale. The Journal of Clinical Nutrition defines glycemic load as a scale that indicates how much oxidative stress certain foods will put on your heart and pancreas (Willet, Mason, Liu). This scale is different from the glycemic index because the glycemic index affects the blood glucose levels and the glycemic load affects how well the heart and pancreas can perform in accordance to the types of foods being consumed. By incorporating this aspect into the diet consumers will make safer choices of caloric foods.

The glycemic index is a great insight to help with weight loss for dieters who do not want a fad diet. With simple changes in food choices, a dieter gets the NutriSystem advantage by following the glycemic index scale. The diet is sorely deficient, however, if it does not incorporate the glycemic load into the diet, thereby creating an unhealthy lifestyle. If a dieter would buy foods that rank low on both scales and eat them in appropriate portions they could lose the same amount of weight and live a healthier life style than on this fad diet. The NutriSystem diet is a diet of convenience. If a person does not have time to go to the store and refer to the glycemic index and load scales then the NutriSystem diet has some possible benefit. But, by simple reference to this glycemic index and load scales a person can save \$300 a month while still eating healthy foods that are safer than the NutriSystem plan.

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TABLE 1: PRESERVATIVES FOUND IN NUTRISYSTEM PRODUCTS (NutriSystem)

Pancake Breakfast

Serving Size 1 Servings Per Container 1.0 Amount Per Serving Calories 120Calories From Fat 25 % Daily Value* Total Fat 3.0g.5% Saturated Fat 0.5 g.3% Cholesterol 65 mg.22% Sodium 400 mg.17% Total Carbohydrate 10 g.3% Dietary Fiber 3 g.12% Sugars 0 g. Protein 14 g. Percent Daily Vitamin A2% Percent Daily Vitamin C0% Percent Daily Calcium4% Percent Daily Iron

Fettuccini Alfredo w. Veggies/Mushrooms Lunch

Nutrition Facts Serving Size 1 Container Servings Per Container 1.0 Amount Per Serving Calories 180Calories From Fat 20 % Daily Value* Total Fat 2.5g.4% Saturated Fat 1.0 g.5% Cholesterol 10 mg.3% Sodium 630 mg.26% Total Carbohydrate 29 g.10% Dietary Fiber 1 g.4% Sugars 3 g. Protein 10 g. Percent Daily Vitamin A8% Percent Daily Vitamin C0% Percent Daily Calcium10% Percent Daily Iron6%

* Based on 2000 calorie maximum recommended amounts.

Meatloaf Dinner

Nutrition Facts Serving Size 1 Servings Per Container 1.0 Amount Per Serving Calories 280Calories From Fat 90 % Daily Value* Total Fat 10.0g.15% Saturated Fat 3.5 g.18% Cholesterol 55 mg.18% Sodium 750 mg.31% Total Carbohydrate 30 g.10% Dietary Fiber 5 g.20% Sugars 6 g. Protein 24 g. Percent Daily Vitamin A10% Percent Daily Vitamin C15% Percent Daily Calcium2% Percent Daily Iron15%

TABLE 2: SELECTING FOODS USING GI AND GL. Foods with the lowest GL and GI are preferable to keep blood glucose from rising rapidly, lessening the risk of diabetes and weight gain. (Willett)

Food	Glycemic Index	g carbo/100 g food	Glycemic Load
Apple	36	12	432
Lentiles	26	29	754
Grain Bread	31	29	899
Sweet Corn	55	19	1045
Dried Apricots	31	48	1488
Ice Cream	50	31	1550
White Bread	70	44	3080

Method

To study the NutriSystem diet effectively and be completely sure that this diet was a proper diet for consumers I had to go beyond the advertising web site. I took the diet's selling point; the glycemic index, and researched it on the internet. I came across the CDA.gov web site. The web sites used to compile my research were government web sites or peer reviewed nutritional journals that met the criteria for reliable internet resources.

Results

A selling point advertised by NutriSystem is that its diet allows clients to "eat healthy" and potentially lose weight, based on the glycemic index scale. But, the do not incorporate the more recently developed glycemic load scale, a more important scale for nutrition and health. The food from NutriSystem, as shown in table 1, contains preservatives. In the data from table 2 it shows the difference in the way that the groups are ranked, and these need to be taken into consideration when putting together the ideal diet. The web site CDA.gov (1) and the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (3) explained the glycemic index and load in complete detail and described how to use the glycemic index and load charts to live a healthier lifestyle. Their sites do not require membership fees.

Discussion

The NutriSystem Diet's biggest sales claim is that clients eat healthily and potentially lose weight. The same effects can be accomplished without the help of NutriSystem by implementing its biggest selling point, the glycemic advantage. CDA.gov explained the glycemic index scale in complete detail and described how to use the glycemic index and also the load scale to live a healthier lifestyle. By referring to glycemic index and also glycemic load a dieter can achieve better and safer effects than the NutriSystem plan in their own kitchen. By implementing behavior modification in making good food choices and self control, a dieter could have long term success without the prepackaged NutriSystem plan.

References

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