

# Gluten Freedom



## A Guide To Living Gluten Free

**\*\* Important \*\***

Being gluten free is a great start to a healthier body but, more than likely, you are not giving your body the 90 essential vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and fatty acids that it desperately needs.

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn to how to take your body from healthy to optimal.

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## **Do You Have a Gluten Allergy?**

There's a lot of information in the news about problems caused by gluten allergies. There's a wide range of symptoms that can be caused by a gluten allergy or, even more seriously, a disease called celiac. Before we look at the symptoms, let's get to the basics of gluten.

Gluten is actually a protein that's found in some grains. You'll find this protein in wheat, rye, and barley. It's not found in oats, but some oats get exposed to other grains during processing so it's possible to be exposed to it from eating them.

If you have a gluten allergy, eating foods high in gluten can be a miserable experience. You may find that you feel bloated and have digestive problems. You may also find that you have a hard time losing weight while some people lose weight because of malnutrition.

Gluten intolerance can also make you feel fatigued and have headaches after eating grains that contain gluten. It can also lead to skin problems such as eczema. You may also have problems with irritability and even depression as a result of this allergy.

Celiac disease is a serious autoimmune disease that can be very problematic. With this disease, eating food with gluten can cause terrible diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and other digestive problems. Celiac disease can be so serious that hospitalization and surgery are required.

If you've been having digestive problems, you may want to talk to your healthcare provider about celiac disease and get tested. Even if you don't have a serious form of celiac, you may find that you have an allergy to gluten.

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While a gluten allergy once meant that you couldn't enjoy food, today's market provides many gluten-free food alternatives. You can easily find gluten-free bread, cookies, and cakes which wasn't possible twenty years ago.

If you suspect you have a gluten allergy, there's a simple way to determine if you're correct. Eating a gluten-free diet for several weeks should help you to feel better if you're suffering from the allergy. If eating gluten-free improves the way you feel, you probably have an allergy or intolerance.

If the change in diet doesn't have any effect on the symptoms you've been feeling, chances are you don't have a gluten allergy after all. You'll want to talk to your healthcare provider about some other causes for your symptoms.

A gluten allergy can make life miserable with the wrong diet. But when you eat gluten-free foods you'll find that you can feel great and eliminate the miserable symptoms. Eliminating wheat, rye, and barley can make a major impact on your health and wellbeing.

### **Preparing to Transition to a Gluten-Free Diet**

Going "cold turkey" into a gluten-free diet can be overwhelming. However, your bloated belly and constant discomfort may lead you to starting a gluten-free diet simply to get beyond the misery. The goal is to be able to free yourself from the discomfort and even debilitating symptoms of gluten intolerance, but you also need to prepare your mind and body as well as your loved ones for this transition. You'll need to talk with family members about your transition to a gluten-free lifestyle. Whether you should force your family into a similar diet is discussed in a chapter further along in this book.

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To get your body prepared, consider doing a short detox program or fasting. Minimally, start to get into the gluten-free lifestyle by weaning yourself off your “must haves.” Do you need to have a bagel every morning? Try substituting fresh fruit for the gluten loaded products.

At the grocery store, ask the manager where you can find gluten-free products. If he doesn't have any, be sure to tell him you'll be looking for an alternative grocer from which to purchase all your groceries until he starts stocking gluten-free products. Of course, make sure he understands that you'll tell your friends where you shop for gluten-free groceries, too!

### **What are Symptoms of Gluten Intolerance?**

The most frequently heard complaint from people with gluten intolerance is that they suffer from digestive problems. Perhaps that is what led you to this resource you are reading now. Studies indicate that as much as fifteen percent of the United States population has trouble digesting gluten. You may very well be part of that statistic.

There are many symptoms which you might experience that could be related to a problem digesting gluten. People who have gluten intolerance are technically allergic to the gluten protein that's found in wheat, barley, and rye. You may feel badly after eating these things.

The most obvious symptoms are problems with diarrhea or constipation. While these two symptoms are at the opposite end of the spectrum, they're both possible if you have gluten intolerance. You may experience bloating and gas, too.

If you have long-term problems with gluten intolerance you may begin to either gain or lose weight without changing your diet very much. Weight loss is particularly common in people who have problems with frequent diarrhea.

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When you go to the doctor, your blood tests may reveal that you have a problem. Many people with gluten intolerance have low levels of nutrients in their blood. For example, you may have a low amount of iron. This malnutrition is due to your body not being able to absorb nutrients.

Beyond your digestive system you may also have other symptoms. People with gluten intolerance often report having skin problems such as dry skin or eczema. Many wonder why they seem to bruise for no reason. They also sometimes experience joint pain. These aren't symptoms you would necessarily expect to be related to a food allergy, but they are.

Women who have gluten intolerance also tend to have more problems with their menstrual cycle. It may be irregular with no other explanation. Because of this they may even have problems with fertility and women who have gluten intolerance are also at greater risk for miscarriage.

Headaches are another common symptom of gluten intolerance. You may also find that you're more irritable and moody than normal because of this food allergy. Depending on your body, you may experience only one or two of these symptoms while some people experience a multitude of them.

There are behavioral conditions that are provoked by a gluten allergy such as, depression, irritability and constant fatigue. In fact, if you've recently been diagnosed with fibromyalgia, consider getting tested for celiac disease. Often these two disorders are misdiagnosed as the other.

One other condition that seems to have a connection to gluten sensitivity or allergies is autism. The theory behind this is since the adult human body has a hard time processing the wheat grains, children have greater difficulty. This has been linked to a condition referred to as "brain fog", which provokes symptoms of autism such as poor focus, irritability, and hyperactivity in

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children with autism. Removing gluten-based foods from the autistic child's diet reduces these negative symptoms and improves the child's ability to cope.

A recent study<sup>1</sup> by researchers at Penn State documented survey data gathered from parents of autistic children regarding the effectiveness of a gluten-free, casein-free diet on children diagnosed with autism. The survey results suggested that parents who completely eliminated both gluten and casein from their child's diet reported the most benefit.

The good news is that you and our healthcare provider can eliminate these other problems once you conclude the symptoms are caused by gluten intolerance. You can begin to change your diet and experience a great deal of improvement in all of these symptoms.

If you have symptoms of gluten intolerance it's important to speak with a healthcare provider to rule out other health problems with similar symptoms. If you have an autistic child, don't postpone getting a specialist involved. And once you've narrowed the source of problems down to gluten intolerance, you have the power to improve your lifestyle and health rapidly.

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<sup>1</sup> "Parents report gluten-, casein-free diet helps some kids with autism" <http://live.psu.edu/story/58107>

## Gluten Sensitivity vs. Celiac Disease vs. Crohn's Disease vs. Irritable Bowel Syndrome

There's a lot of talk today about gluten intolerance or allergies and having problems digesting it. But what's the difference between having a little sensitivity to gluten and having a health condition that requires medical attention? Let's take a look at some of the different conditions you've heard of.

**Celiac disease** is a serious disease that comes from an autoimmune response to gluten in the body. People who have celiac disease need to eat a gluten-free diet. Basically, gluten intolerance and celiac disease are one in the same with varying degrees of problematic symptoms. The symptoms of celiac disease range from diarrhea, constipation and gas to anemia, irritability, or frequent nose bleeds.

When you have celiac disease, the lining of your small intestine actually becomes damaged. This is the part of your digestive system that absorbs nutrients from your food. Continued problems with celiac can actually cause you to become malnourished.

Malnourishment from celiac can further cause symptoms such as fatigue, problems with appetite, and even nausea and vomiting. No one knows exactly why this happens, but we do know that following a gluten-free diet will control it.

**Crohn's disease** is another painful condition that takes place in the intestinal tract. This is an autoimmune disease that causes symptoms similar to celiac disease, but it's not related to gluten. A diagnosis of Crohn's will come by ruling out other conditions.

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If you have Crohn's, you may want to avoid foods that cause problems with gas and bloating for you – they can be different for different people. However, gluten isn't thought to be the culprit. Crohn's is treated by improving diet, taking medications, and even surgery.

**Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)** is another disorder of the digestive tract. It has a wide range of symptoms such as diarrhea and constipation. Some people with irritable bowel syndrome have problems with frequent and urgent bowel movements.

There's no one cause for IBS, rather it's a collection of symptoms that aren't caused by any specific thing. Your diet will need to change based on what's best for you, but gluten isn't the sole culprit for this problem.

With **gluten sensitivity**, you may experience mild problems such as bloating and gas when you eat foods that contain gluten. However, you're not likely to have a violent response or malnourishment as people with celiac disease experience.

Whether you have gluten sensitivity or celiac disease, it makes sense to eat a gluten-free diet so you can eliminate all of your symptoms. It can be uncomfortable and embarrassing to have problems with your digestive system. In the case of celiac, eliminating gluten can literally save your life.

## What is it About Gluten that Makes You Ill?

If you have celiac disease or gluten intolerance, you may wonder what it is about gluten that makes you sick. In modern times more and more people are affected by problems with gluten and have turned to a gluten-free diet in order to regain wellness.

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Gluten is a protein that's found in grains such as wheat, rye, and barley. This protein is abundant in foods that contain these grains. And while it seems pretty innocuous it can cause some major problems in the body.

Just like with any allergy, someone who has an allergy to gluten can have a serious response.

The body sees the protein as a foreign invader that needs to be destroyed and removed from the body. When you have an allergy to pollen, it causes you to sneeze, have watery eyes, and can lead to problems with your sinuses. That's your body's response to ridding your body of it.

With a gluten allergy, your digestive system is doing the same type of thing – trying to attack it and get rid of it.

Your body's immune system is very complex and very advanced. It produced antibodies that are designed to specifically fight foreign invaders. When you have a gluten allergy, your body produces antibodies that are marked to fight the protein.

When the gluten enters your body, it's immediately recognized by the antibodies and your immune system is alerted that it's time to make a full-scale attack. For some people this results in some diarrhea or even constipation.

For others, the allergy is much more severe and actually causes damage to the lining of the small intestine. This form of the allergy is known as celiac disease. The good news is that while there's no cure for this illness, it can be controlled through diet.

By eating a gluten-free diet, you deprive your body of the allergen. If you don't expose it to gluten you won't experience symptoms. And fortunately, it's easier to establish and maintain a "gluten free" diet today than in years past.

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There are many products on the market that will even allow you to enjoy foods that are usually made from wheat, barley, or rye. You can find gluten-free bread, crackers, cookies, and cakes.

As you eliminate the gluten from your body, you'll begin to feel better and better.

No one knows for sure what causes the allergy to gluten, though it may be genetic. In the end, if you have problems processing gluten it's best to stay away from it. This is an allergy that can cause serious and devastating symptoms if you ignore it.

## **DIY Testing for Gluten Sensitivity**

People concerned about gluten proteins causing problems can perform some basic DIY testing for gluten sensitivity which will help you get closer to the specific cause of health problems and allow them to move toward permanent relief.

So is there a way to perform a do-it-yourself test for gluten sensitivity? While the preferred option is to have testing performed by a doctor or a specialist in allergies and immunology, you may not want to spend the time or money getting that done until you've ruled out other possible conditions.

One thing you can do is keep a food diary that includes symptoms. You can track exactly what you're eating and write down any experiences you have with bloating, gas, constipation, or diarrhea. You should also note symptoms such as fatigue and headaches.

Over time, you'll begin to see patterns developing if you have sensitivity to gluten. For example, you may notice that every time you eat bread you have bloating. You may also want to try a gluten-free bread alternative to see how your body reacts. Keeping a daily food journal will prove very useful should you end up going to an allergist or specialist.

The pulse test can actually help you determine if you have an allergy to gluten or to any food. You'll want to log your resting pulse rate at several times throughout the day and record it. Then you'll want to record your pulse after eating different, specific foods.

The idea is that when you eat foods for which you have an allergy, your pulse will actually speed up as your immune response kicks in. You'll want to do this over a long period of time. It's also important to remember that movement, stress, and other factors can cause similar changes.

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There are also home testing kits available for celiac disease. These kits help to test whether or not you have antibodies for gluten in your system. These tests are simple and easy to use and give results within minutes.

Eliminating gluten can also help you to decide if you're intolerant to it. If you avoid gluten for a time and notice that you're feeling much better, you're probably someone who has an allergy to gluten.

If restricting your diet from gluten products doesn't give you much relief from symptoms, there may be multiple allergies or other diseases involved. Therefore, it's important to make an appointment with your healthcare provider. He or she can verify the allergy through more sophisticated testing. One thing to be aware of is when you eliminate gluten from your diet with your DIY gluten testing, you'll make it difficult for professional medical tests to pick up your celiac disease. If you're going to meet with your healthcare provider, it's best to revert to your old eating habits to achieve more relevant results from your tests.

## **What is a Gluten-Free Diet?**

In order to get an understanding of what a gluten-free diet is all about, it helps to first know what gluten is. Gluten is a protein that's found in grains such as wheat, barley, and rye.

Some people have an allergy to this protein and eating foods with gluten cause symptoms such as diarrhea, constipation, vomiting, and gas. As you can imagine, it's important to eliminate gluten if you have such an allergy.

Living with a gluten-free diet was once a difficult feat, but these days it's pretty easy to find gluten-free recipes and products. If you wish to eliminate gluten from your diet, it helps to evaluate what you're eating now.

Items made with whole wheat or white flour all contain gluten. This means most cookies, cakes, breads, muffins, pastas, and cereals contain it. To eat gluten-free, you'll need to replace those items with gluten-free versions.

Some grains are safe to eat. Oats, for example, don't naturally contain gluten. However, it's important to look for oats labeled as "gluten-free" because they can become exposed to other grains when they're processed.

Many people diagnosed with gluten sensitivity or celiac disease fear that they won't be able to enjoy the foods they love. But a quick trip to Whole Foods or even the local supermarket can open up the possibilities for a variety of food options. A health food store is another option for gluten-free products. However, if you can access the internet, by all means check out the gluten-free items on Amazon.com.

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If you haven't used Amazon before it is the Mega of Megastore with everything from tropical fish food to diatomaceous earth products. It offers great selections of gluten-free products and often your order is shipped FREE. Amazon is truly the answer to stress-free shopping for special dietary needs.

Mixes for gluten-free brownies, cookies, muffins, and breads are readily available. You'll also be able to find ready-made gluten-free bread, cookies, and noodles. These are usually made of other grains that don't contain gluten and haven't been exposed to it through processing.

You'll need to check the labels of everything you eat when you're beginning a gluten-free diet. This little protein can turn up in unexpected places. For example, it can be found in soups, frozen meals, and other ready-to-eat foods.

It's important to look at the ingredients to see if wheat, rye, and/or barley are on the label. Many products will advertise that they're gluten-free to make it easier for you to get your shopping done. You can still eat many foods you enjoy when you go gluten-free.

Anything that doesn't contain gluten and hasn't been exposed to it is safe to eat. Rice, fruits, vegetables, most dairy products, and meats are safe to enjoy. While it may be difficult to eliminate gluten at first, it becomes easier as you continue to practice a gluten-free lifestyle.

Eliminating your symptoms is great motivation for determining what path to follow for a gluten-free diet.

## **Fad or Health Movement**

One can certainly understand why moving to a diet free of gluten can help relieve serious health conditions caused by an allergic reaction to gluten. There is a growing trend for people who

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don't suffer from gluten intolerance or celiac disease to abstain from gluten products even though they don't experience distress after consuming gluten products. The bottom line is the gluten protein is very hard to digest and is rough on your gut. When your stomach is not functioning well, your entire body will not feel as healthy as it should because it simply cannot absorb all of the proper nutrients from the foods you eat. The result is a body that is not nourished efficiently, and one that is more susceptible to illnesses.

## Advantages of a Gluten-Free Diet

For some people, a gluten allergy makes eating gluten-free a necessity. But even if you don't have an allergy, a gluten-free diet can be beneficial. One of the greatest benefits of eating gluten-free is to remove an overload of carbohydrates from your diet. Consuming fewer carbs can help people lose weight. Many of the high sugar carbohydrates that lead to weight gain also contain gluten. So if you remove gluten from your diet, you'll also reduce your caloric intake.

A gluten-free diet is naturally more dependent on fruits, vegetables, and proteins to get your nutrition. You'll be avoiding many products that are processed such as breads, cereals, cookies, and cakes that can lead to weight gain.

You'll also improve your health. When you eat more fruits and vegetables, you'll increase the fiber in your diet. This can help you to lower your cholesterol, regulate your digestive system, and lower your risk of developing diabetes.

A gluten-free diet can also help you to reduce your risk of developing some cancers. A diet high in fiber, low in fat and chemicals from processing and high in vitamins can help your body fight off cancer.

Your immune system will also function better when you have a diet that's high in antioxidants that come from fruits and vegetables. You'll have fewer problems with colds, flus, and other infections.

If weight loss and improved health aren't enough to convince you, you might also consider that a gluten-free diet can help you to have increased energy. Many people who find that they feel sluggish or run down find that those feelings go away as they remove gluten from their diet.

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