

to *be* or  
*not* to be...

# Gluten-Free

health & wellness

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*For people with celiac disease, gluten triggers an immune response that can inflame and damage the digestive tract (small intestine) as well as other severe long-term issues. For the population of people that suffer from this disease, even the smallest gluten-filled cracker can lead to an entire day or longer of miserable flu-like symptoms, as well as digestive issues. However, the percentage of individuals in the U.S. who actually have this disease is very minute.*

Millions of Americans across the United States consume a gluten-free diet, yet nearly 75% of them do not suffer from celiac disease. So why are so many Americans going gluten-free, when the majority of these individuals do not suffer the symptoms of having a gluten intolerance? The reality of it is that generally, most of us do NOT have an allergy to gluten.

Let us educate ourselves as to what “gluten-free” actually means. Gluten is a combination of two proteins commonly found in wheat and other grains such as rye and barley. Most commonly, after removing gluten from a food product, it is then replaced with some sort of starch. The type of starches used to replace gluten typically consists of tapioca, cassava, potatoes, beans, rice, etc. Starch is composed of individual sugars joined together (glucose units joined by glycosidic bonds). Therefore, just like wheat, rye, and barley, ALL of these replacements used to create a “gluten-free” food product also consist of starch. Therefore, all that has been removed from the food product and your diet, are the gluten proteins.

This means that while you are spending three times as much purchasing “gluten-free” foods, you are basically just paying for fewer nutrients. You are not creating healthier eating habits, and you might as well just be purchasing and consuming regular bread or pasta. Gluten-containing whole grains, such as wheat and barley, contain a substantial amount of fiber and nutrients like B vitamins, iron and magnesium. When you choose to consume a food product where gluten is removed, you are subsequently replacing gluten with ingredients such as tapioca, which mainly consists of carbs and calories.

Stop kidding yourself that going gluten-free is healthy eating. Just because something is gluten-free doesn't mean that it does not make your glucose and insulin soar, leading to increased belly fat and fatigue. Lower the starchy comfort foods in your diet, count the carbs you are eating and aim for high fiber and the lowest sugar possible in the carbs you eat. Focus your diet on proteins, veggies, and good fats. Eat clean foods and steer clear of preservatives, additives and other harmful toxins in processed foods. To reduce the majority of food sensitivities, consider eating whole foods 80% of the time that are not altered or processed in any way.

When it comes down to it, it really is all about your diet and the amount of exercise you get that truly make a difference in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is about managing your stress, getting your hormones checked, hydration, feeding your body nutritious foods, and enjoying the not so nutritious foods in moderation. For more nutritional and hormone balancing testing and advice, make an appointment at One Peak Medical clinic and optimize your health.

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