

Benefits of a Gluten-Free Diet

Gluten is a protein found in grains such as wheat and barley, and allergies to this nutrient are becoming increasingly prevalent for people of all age groups. However, it is an issue that can be especially problematic in seniors. There are three levels to the issue: a gluten allergy, a gluten intolerance and [celiac disease](#), which is the most severe form of gluten sensitivity. You will often hear them used interchangeably, and so to simplify things, this article will endeavor to do the same. Most people affected with this health issue, regardless of its severity, choose to adopt a gluten-free diet, which is a very effective and simple treatment. In this article, we will discuss the following:

- Important Facts About Celiac Disease
- The Symptoms of Celiac Disease
- What are Considered “Trigger” Foods
- What It Means To Be “Gluten-Free”
- How To Self-Treat And Prevent Symptoms

Important Facts About Celiac Disease

Gluten intolerance actually can cause significant damage to the lining of the small intestine and prevent them from absorbing nutrients necessary to your health. As a result, anemia is an all-too-common result of having celiac disease. While the cause of gluten intolerance remains elusive (apart from being a genetic disorder), its symptoms make it relatively easy to diagnose and treat. Unfortunately, this disease is such that regardless of how healthy your meal is, if gluten is present in the food, it negates any nutritional benefit you may have received from the food. Statistically, women are affected more than men, and it can also prove to have hereditary trends.

Symptoms of Celiac Disease

As with many diseases and allergic reactions, the symptoms for gluten intolerance can vary from person to person. The [most common symptoms](#) include:

- Sudden and unexplained weight loss
- Abdominal pain
- Indigestion
- Diarrhea
- Decreased appetite and constipation

Apart from these often painful or irritating symptoms, it is not uncommon to experience excessive fatigue, muscle or joint pain, itchy skin and even hair loss. If you do experience any of the above-mentioned symptoms, either independently or in conjunction with fatigue, joint pain, itchy skin or hair loss, it is certainly recommended you schedule an appointment with your doctor.

Foods That Trigger Gluten Intolerance

We all love a freshly baked roll or a cracker with cheese from time to time, but for those with a gluten allergy the joy of eating isn't worth the pain suffered later. The unfortunate thing is that gluten is found in myriad foods, and so being mindful of triggers can end up being a full time job. Some of the more common symptom-inducing foods are:

- Flour
- Cereals
- Many processed foods
- Man-made sauces (i.e. pre-made salad dressing)
- Candy bars and many commercially sold ice creams
- Some cold cuts
- Canned meats
- Instant coffee
- Pasta

Although this may seem like a short list, think of how many foods we routinely enjoy that contain any of the above-mentioned foods. However, there has definitely been an influx of food products that purport to be "gluten-free". If you have been diagnosed with cCeliac dDisease, or even just a sensitivity to gluten, by checking the food labels you can easily avoid these triggers.

What It Means to be "Gluten-Free"

A "gluten-free" diet may sound good in theory, but it is important to understand what that really means. Since it is sometimes like a math equation to figure what contains gluten, it is possible to eat something with a sauce on top, for example, and have no idea that gluten is even present. That said, a good place to start with a gluten-free diet is to eliminate anything containing wheat, rye or barley. In severe cases of gluten sensitivity, you may even want to avoid foods processed in the same plant where the aforementioned grains are also processed (food labels by law must contain this information). Corn, potatoes, rice, quinoa, buckwheat and soy are among a small selection of foods that do not contain gluten, and thus may go a long way towards safely satisfying the need for starch and carbohydrates in your diet.

How to Treat and Prevent Symptoms

While gluten allergies and intolerance can be treated effectively with a gluten-free diet, there is no cure for celiac disease; a gluten-free diet helps manage the symptoms, but the underlying issue will always remain. The best way to help treat this problem is through a committed lifestyle of gluten avoidance. By giving focused attention to nutrition labels, you can help avoid instances of accidental ingestion as well.

Whether you have celiac disease or just a simple intolerance for gluten, by following these

directions, you can avoid triggers and absorb everything in the food you are eating.