

## What you need to know about going Gluten Free...



### Why Gluten Free?

Some people may suffer gluten intolerance and not even be aware that it is gluten or even more commonly wheat that is causing feelings of general malaise. I have found that many people feel much better by reducing the amount of gluten in their diet. This may be due to the fact that gluten can coat the intestines to form a glue like substance which can impede the absorption of nutrients. The protein in gluten can have an opioid like effect on the brain leaving you feeling lethargic and foggy in the head. Start first with reducing wheat based products and keep a food diary to monitor how you feel. Out of all the grains wheat appears to trigger the most severe responses most likely due to wheat being heavily sprayed with chemical pesticides. Many people feel much better off wheat as it reduces inflammation and toxicity within the body. If you do eat wheat and gluten choose organic to avoid unnecessary toxic pesticides and chemical residues.

In people with celiac disease, gluten (the main protein in wheat, barley, and rye) acts as a foreign antigen, triggering an immune response that damages the lining of the small intestine. This results in malabsorption of fat, calcium, iron, folate, and other nutrients that if left untreated can lead to serious illness and disease.

Celiacs must follow a strict lifelong gluten free diet to avoid adverse health conditions. Early signs of celiac disease can be weight loss, thinning hair, skin rashes, tiredness, digestive issues and aches and pains. If you suspect that you may be celiac a blood test can confirm for you, however if you have already cut gluten out of the diet and have the test, it may show up as a false negative so the test is not 100% reliable.

Many people, whilst not celiac, can be gluten intolerant. Gluten intolerance is not as severe as celiac disease so you may not be aware that gluten may be causing digestive issues. Gluten acts like glue in the intestines impairing nutrient absorption and/or triggering inflammation within the body. Problems really arise when your diet is predominantly gluten based – toast or cereal for breakfast, a sandwich for lunch, biscuits with afternoon tea, pasta or noodles for dinner and cereal based malt drinks. **Gluten overload!**

If you suffer with any of the below symptoms you may find that you feel better by cutting down on the amount of wheat and gluten that you eat.

- Digestive issues such as bloating, wind pains, diarrhoea and or constipation.
- Lethargy, brain fog or feeling tired after eating wheat or gluten.
- Mood disorders such as anxiety and depression.
- If you have been medically diagnosed with an autoimmune disease such as Hashimoto's thyroiditis, Rheumatoid arthritis, Ulcerative colitis, Lupus, Psoriasis, or Multiple sclerosis.
- Headaches
- Neurologic symptoms such as dizziness or feeling of being off balance.
- Hormonal imbalances such as polycystic ovaries, unexplainable infertility problems
- Chronic fatigue or fibromyalgia.
- Inflammation and pain in your joints.

Following a gluten free dietary protocol may sound daunting however the following therapeutic protocol has been designed as an easy to follow resource.

Eating for optimum health and introducing new foods and easy to follow lifestyle tips allow for a stress free way to go gluten free.

## What is Gluten?

Gluten is part of a protein that can be found in many processed foods and grains such as wheat, barley, rye and triticale. It is important to avoid gluten containing foods to avoid damage to the inner lining of the bowel which could inhibit food from being absorbed and digested properly. Apart from uncomfortable side effects from eating gluten such as bloating, diarrhoea, lack of concentration, weight loss and poor growth and development, coeliac disease can lead to malnutrition and increased risk of disease.

## Read food labels

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code requires that for a food to be labelled gluten free it must contain “no detectable gluten”.

Always check food labels for gluten which is declared on the label. Foods labelled as gluten free must not contain any detectable gluten.

Eat fresh, organic produce where possible and try to avoid processed or packet foods as these can be high in salt, sugar and refined carbohydrates which further complicate inflammatory disease within the body.

Remember a gluten free label does not ensure that it is a healthy choice!



## Foods and drinks to avoid

Avoid foods containing gluten such as flours, bread, pasta, pizza, cereals, cakes, cookies, muesli bars and processed foods as even starch and thickeners in sauces can contain gluten. Even soy sauce, lollies, medications, vitamin supplements and ketchup can all contain traces of gluten.

Examples:

- Malt
- Cereal filler (found in sausages, burgers etc.)
- Starch
- Thickener
- Sauces e.g. tabasco, soy, tomato, barbeque
- Processed foods e.g. sausages, meats, crumbed foods, battered foods, crackers, cookies
- Wheat
- Rye
- Barley
- Triticale
- Oats (can be contaminated so avoid if celiac)
- Cous Cous
- Semolina
- Bran

- Brewer's Yeast
- Wholemeal Flour
- Beer
- Whiskey

**Avoid processed foods where possible.**

## Food tips

Cook food at home where possible so you know what is in the food you are preparing.

Use rice flour or gluten free corn flour for thickening sauces, gravy, casseroles etc. (These are high GI (glycaemic index) so use sparingly if you have blood sugar problems or are trying to lose weight).

Gluten free flours such as rice, buckwheat or coconut can easily be substituted in your favourite recipes. Check the health food section in the supermarket for gluten free pre mixed flours for baking.

Nutrient dense foods are important to include on a daily basis to ensure adequate nutrition. If you are gluten intolerant it is likely that you are already low in nutrients such as magnesium, b vitamins and folate so these need to be boosted with nutrient rich foods to regain vitality.

Nutrient rich foods:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Fresh poultry, fish, eggs and lean meat
- Legumes such as lentils, chickpeas, beans
- Brown rice, quinoa, chia seeds (good sources of fibre and nutrients)

Stir fry's and rice based dishes are good wheat and gluten free alternatives for family meals. Gluten free soy sauce and sauces can be easily purchased from supermarkets. Tamari sauce is a wheat free substitute for soy sauce. Remember these are high in sodium so use sparingly.

Experiment with cauliflower to use as a healthier nutritious alternative for pizza bases, cauliflower rice and mash.

Popcorn, corn crackers, dried fruit and nuts are not necessarily healthy snack alternatives as they spike blood sugar levels and are low in nutrients. Try healthy snacks such as carrot sticks and homemade hummus or avocado dip, cut up apple with nut butter, natural yoghurt and berries.

Taking a home prepared pack lunch to work or school can avoid temptations and poor food choices.

## Lifestyle tips

Where possible substitute gluten with wheat free alternatives so you do not need to prepare separate family dishes.

Carry a list of foods to avoid with you so if you are eating out there is quick reference check of what to avoid.

Prepare gluten free snacks and foods that you can take to parties and family events to ensure there is suitable food to eat.

Most healthy non processed foods are naturally gluten free. You will find that as you move away from eating processed foods, the easier it is to prepare gluten free meals.

Gluten free foods can be purchased from regular supermarkets such as Coles or Woolworths, Health foods stores and online. Most restaurants also now have gluten free meals marked on their menus.

## Nutrition and meal ideas:

As gluten intolerance can lead to nutritional deficiencies due to malabsorption issues it is important to eat a wide variety of fresh foods every day.

Nutritional supplements may be beneficial to reduce possible malnutrition issues. (Only ever take supplements when recommended by your practitioner).

A routine blood test can determine vitamin D and iron deficiencies.

### Breakfast:

- Gluten free toast with avocado and tomato, tinned sardines and cucumber; nut butter; banana; hummus, rocket and tomato.
- Fruit and natural full fat yoghurt with hand full of nuts and seeds.
- Rice, millet, or quinoa porridge with fresh fruit and nuts.
- Eggs -boiled, scrambled, omelette etc.

### Lunch:

- Homemade meat and vegetable soup or stew.

- Salads: make up your own big bowl with lots of raw fresh vegetables, avocado, sunflower seeds olive oil and chicken or an alternative protein (egg, tuna, salmon, tofu etc.).
- Avocado, tinned fish, tomato and rocket wrapped in a lettuce leaf.
- Steamed veggies and fresh salmon.

#### Dinner:

- Grilled/baked fish with steamed/stir fried vegetables.
- Stews on a bed of sweet potato mash, rice or spinach.
- Veggie & chicken stir fry with garlic, ginger, chilli and tamari.
- Steak and veggies.
- Mushroom omelette or veggie frittata with a big salad.

#### Useful resources

Coeliac Australia: [www.coeliac.org.au](http://www.coeliac.org.au)

Includes membership information, list of state coeliac societies, symptoms and diagnosis, and list of publications

Celiac Supplies: [www.celiacsupplies.com.au/home](http://www.celiacsupplies.com.au/home)

Gluten free foods and recipe ideas, books and classes on managing the disease

Gluten Free Shop: [www.glutenfreeshop.com.au](http://www.glutenfreeshop.com.au)

gluten free foods and recipe ideas

Freedom Foods: [www.freedomfoods.com.au](http://www.freedomfoods.com.au)

Available from Coles, Woolworths, Franklins, IGA, Foodland and health food stores. Offer a wide variety of gluten free foods such as gluten free pasta, sauces and snacks.

Gluten Free Directory [www.glutenfreeeatingdirectory.com.au](http://www.glutenfreeeatingdirectory.com.au)

Where to eat gluten free food directory

Iphone and android gluten free directory apps can also be downloaded so you have instant on the go access.