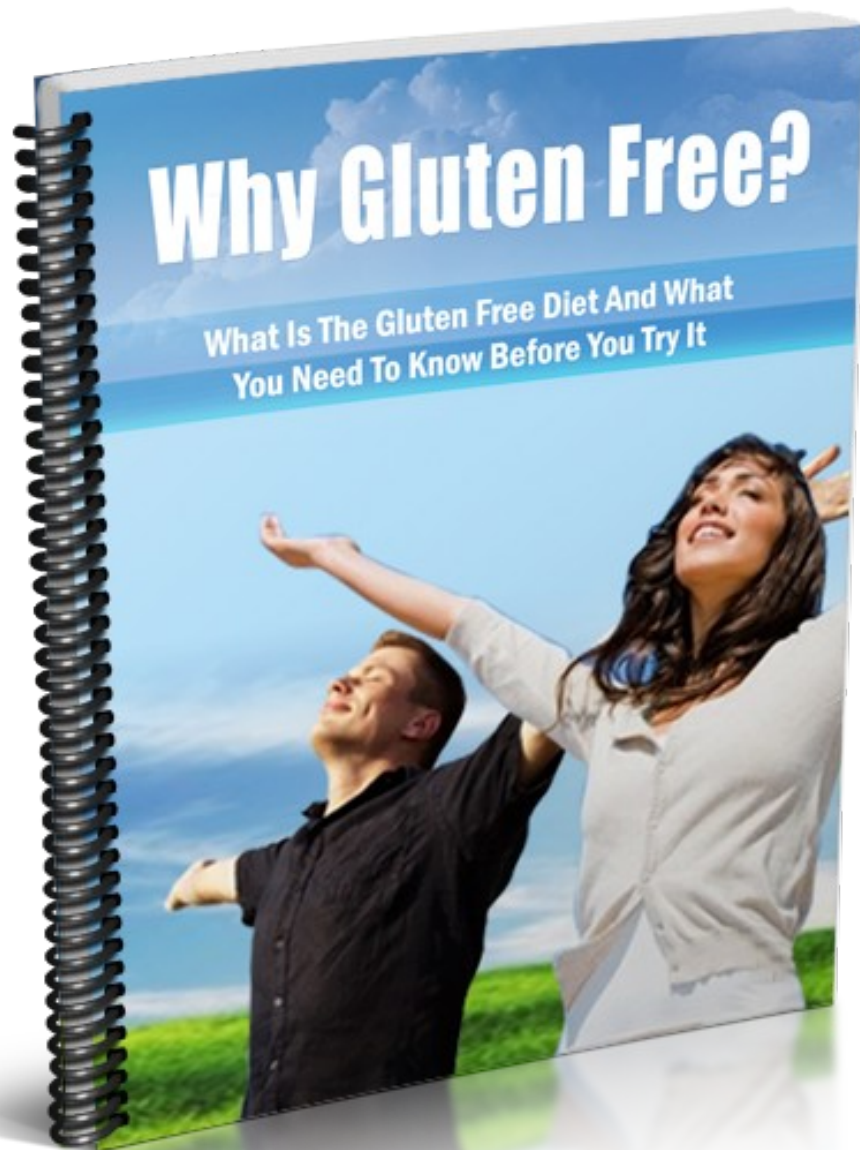


## Why Gluten Free?

*What Is The Gluten Free Diet And What You Need To Know Before You Try It*

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### Introduction

You may have heard the term “gluten free”, and you may even have a general idea as to what it means to eat a gluten free diet. Most people believe this type of diet is a curse for those who simply cannot tolerate the protein known as gluten, as they will never be able to eat any food that contains wheat, rye, barley, malts, or triticale. And since gluten is often used as an additive to thicken and flavor foods, referred to in this case as dextrin, most foods have to be completely off limits. Right? Wrong!

While it is true that a gluten free diet is the only medically accepted form of treatment for certain types of medical conditions such as wheat allergies, dermatitis herpetiformis, and celiac disease, and it does limit somewhat the food choices of people with these conditions, it does not mean that the diet has to be bland or boring.

In fact, a gluten free diet does not have to be difficult, and it can include a variety of foods that will keep dieters from feeling deprived. By taking the time to follow a few simple guidelines, you will find the process relatively simple.

The first thing you need to do is refocus your attention on what types of foods you can have, and focus less on what you cannot. Safe foods include

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unprocessed, uncoated, unmarinated meats and fish, potatoes, corn, nuts, beans, legumes, eggs, oils, coffee beans, unflavored teas, plain milk, fruit juices, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Plain herbs and spices, not spice mixes, are also quite safe and add a great deal of gluten free flavor to dishes.

While certain grains, such as those previously mentioned do need to be avoided, there are other types of grains that are gluten free and considered to be completely safe. These grains are: soy (not soy sauce as it contains wheat), rice, sorghum, montina, buckwheat, amaranth, corn, teff, and quinoa.

There are also a number of different types of flours that are gluten free available on the market today. These flours make delicious baked goods and other products, and are safe to use to coat food. Gluten free flours are made from the safe grains, as well as other gluten free foods such as potatoes, beans, tapioca, and nuts. Flours free of gluten can be readily found in a variety of health food stores as well as supermarkets today.

Due to the fact that more and more people are choosing to take up a gluten free lifestyle, there are now also a variety of ready to use gluten free food products, such as tortillas, bagels, and pizzas, along with gluten free baking mixes such a for cookies, cakes, breads, and muffins.

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Due to the ever growing popularity of being gluten free, there is also gluten free pasta, which is also easily found in most grocery stores and is made from corn, rice, buckwheat, and/or quinoa. There are also buckwheat noodles which are tasty and safe, making for easy food substitutions.

### Reasons to go Gluten Free

As previously discussed, there are certain health conditions that make it important for some individuals to go on a gluten free diet. Simply nibbling on bread or even drinking a beer can cause these people extreme bloating, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and gas. For people who have been diagnosed with celiac disease, eating gluten filled foods can cause an autoimmune response in the body that actually can damage the small intestine, and block key nutrients from being properly absorbed.

While everyone understands that people with medical conditions or serious allergies have no choice but to give up gluten, the question remains, why are people who can safely eat gluten giving up their favorite foods, when they do not even have to do so?

This trend is becoming extremely popular as many personal trainers, fitness experts, and even the Hollywood elite are choosing to go gluten free. If so

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many people are choosing to go this route, there must be reasons, and there must be great benefits.

## The Serious Condition of Celiac Disease

As was touched upon earlier, celiac disease is the main reason for people to give up gluten, and it can be a serious condition. This condition is an autoimmune disease that is inherited and can cause the small intestine to become damaged when the protein that is found in rye, wheat, and barley, known as gluten, is consumed.

Symptoms of celiac disease can range in severity from person to person, which makes it common for a proper diagnosis not to be made right away. Because a high number of cases go undiagnosed, it is estimated that the current number of cases (one in one hundred thirty three people) is actually much higher. For some people, constipation is the only symptom, while others have severe diarrhea, and for others there are no problems with regularity.

Other symptoms that are commonly experienced with celiac disease are: gas, indigestion, pain in the abdomen, bloating, vomiting, nausea, lactose intolerance, a decrease in appetite, a distended stomach, irregular stools, and weight loss that cannot be fully explained.

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Celiac disease also comes with a variety of symptoms that are not related to digestion such as: bruising easily, pain in the joints or bones, depression, children with growth delays, hair loss, fatigue, malnutrition, changes in behavior, anemia, irritability, skin problems, seizures, ulcers in the mouth, decrease in bone density, muscle cramps, swelling, hypoglycemia, nose bleeds, difficulty breathing or catching the breath, defects in tooth enamel or discolorations, and deficiencies in vitamins or minerals such as folate, vitamin K, or iron.

## Non-Celiac People Turning Gluten Free

Now that there is a firm understanding of why some people have to go gluten free, let's dive into the reasons why people who do not suffer with allergies or intolerances are trending toward giving up gluten.

**Nutrition:** The truth is, if you can get nutrition from gluten, you can also get it from other sources that are healthier and provide better quality nutrients. While gluten grains are considered to be high in B vitamins and fiber, you can actually get the same quality, if not better nutrition from other foods.

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For example, wheat flour is packed full of niacin and thiamin. Switching to flaxseeds provides even greater amounts of these nutrients, while being completely free of gluten. If you are concerned about a reduction in fiber, this too is easily remedied. Foods such as green peas and collard greens contain very high levels of fiber, much more than gluten containing grains, while being absolutely safe.

**Gluten is Rough on Your Stomach:** Whether you are gluten sensitive or not, gluten is rough on your stomach. 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.

**Gluten is Difficult to Process:** Even if you do not realize it, your body may have a difficult time processing gluten. This is more common in Caucasian people, and even though it is estimated that just over one percent of people have celiac disease, the numbers are probably much higher. Inflammation is caused by Gluten: Grains that are high in starch often lead to inflammations within the body. The more the refined the grain is, the more potential there is for inflammation. Unbleached white flour is much more inflammatory than even processed wheat flour. On the other hand, gluten free foods such as fresh vegetables and healthy types of fat can

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actually help to reduce inflammation. Patients who suffer with arthritis, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and even allergies have all shown improvement while on a gluten free diet.

**Gluten Blocks Mineral Absorption:** For the most part, gluten grains are not properly prepared, which makes it very difficult for the body to gain any nutrition from these foods. While you may believe you are eating a diet rich in key nutrients, iron, and calcium, gluten grains that are eaten will actually block your body's ability to absorb everything you need.

**Gluten Harms Teeth:** High in phytate, gluten grains actually have been linked to tooth decay. Phytic acid, or phytates, block many minerals from being absorbed, which causes bacteria to feed on the starches, causing decay in the teeth.

**Gluten is not great for the Skin:** Most types of glutens are foods that are high in carbohydrates. While carbohydrates are not bad, and are important to overall nutrition, they are broken down by the body into various types of sugars. Sugar instructs the body to make insulin, which then causes a response in the body to produce certain hormones. This then makes the sebum glands in the body produce more oil, which can lead to greater formations of acne and other annoying and unsightly skin problems.

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**Eating Gluten makes the body want more Gluten:** How many times have you smelled a batch of freshly baked cookies and just had to have one? Chances are once you ate one, you went back for another. The same holds true for a warm loaf of bread, straight out of the oven. Who has just one slice? These foods, due to their high carbohydrate qualities, cause the body to receive a fast burst of energy. Unfortunately, this energy burst does not last, but does make the body crave more. This is due to a rise and fall in insulin levels, which causes the vicious cycle to continue on a regular basis.

**A Link to Autism:** Gluten has also been linked to autism in children. While it cannot be said that gluten causes autism, it has been suggested that reducing or completely eliminating gluten from the diet of children who have been diagnosed with the condition may be able to improve once these types of grains are removed. The idea behind this concept is that because adult bodies have a hard time processing the grains, children have greater difficulty. This has been linked to a condition referred to as “brain fog”, which further inhibits the development of children with autism. By reducing the potential for this fog to form, children begin to come around, show improvement, and have an overall reduction in the symptoms associated with autism.

## Conclusion

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As you can see, there are a number of reasons and benefits to starting a gluten free lifestyle. While switching over completely will require a bit of a transition process, in time you will find that the transformation you experience in your body, and the health of your family was well worth the extra bit of effort. Since there are a number of products on the market that are readily found in any grocery store today, finding foods that are gluten free is easier than ever before.

All it takes to get the most out of a gluten free lifestyle is a commitment to do so, a bit of a shift in your way of thinking, and the time needed to make the transition. Once you have established your new way of life, you will never again return to eating gluten filled foods, as you will find you have more energy, more stamina, a clearer head, lower blood pressure, and even better overall nutrition.

While you may encounter a bit of hesitation from your family, should you choose to turn your whole family gluten free, stick with it. The best way to garner their support is to make small, gradual changes that do not require too much from them all at once. Try switching to gluten free pasta, instead of regular. Start baking gluten free bread, and buying gluten free cereal. In time you will find that not only will your family feel better, they will not even notice the changes and will be well on their way to living a gluten free lifestyle.

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