



Healthy Gluten-Free Eating

The gluten-free diet is often lacking in nutrients, since removing wheat, rye and barley takes significant sources of B vitamins out of the diet. In addition, few gluten-free products are enriched with vitamins and minerals. The gluten-free diet is also often low in iron, calcium, magnesium, zinc, phosphorous and fat-soluble vitamins.

Symptoms of the following vitamin & mineral deficiencies can include:

B Vitamins: irritability, depression, mental disturbances, foggy brain, moodiness, headaches, diarrhea, muscle weakness, fatigue.

Fat-soluble vitamins: burning sensation in mouth, diarrhea, problems sleeping, nervousness, bone disease.

Iron: anemia, brittle nails, confusion, depression, fatigue, dizziness, headaches, inflamed tongue, mouth lesions.

Calcium: nails, bones, cramps, depression, insomnia, irritability, tooth problems.

Magnesium: muscle problems (controlling, relaxation), bone disease - since needed for use of calcium in the body.

Zinc: irritability, memory, depression, impairment in thinking, brittle bones, diarrhea, loss of appetite, wound healing problems.

If the gluten-free diet is not well balanced, what can we do about it? Work at getting these nutrients.

You'll notice a theme regarding the foods that will provide these nutrients:

B vitamins: animal products (meats, fish) milk products, eggs, nuts, seeds, whole grains and fortified products; leafy vegetables; yellow/orange vegetables; fruits – citrus, melons and dates.

Vitamin D: fish, liver, cheese, mushroom, Calcium-fortified drinks, milk and yogurt products. And, being outdoors in sunshine.

Zinc: legumes, whole grains, tofu and milk, fish, beef, liver, nuts and seeds.

Magnesium and calcium: dark green leafy vegetables, bananas, nuts, seeds, whole grains.

Calcium: important for bones: many of us don't get enough anyway. Consider other sources if can't have dairy: some fruits and veggies, quinoa; dark green vegetables, fortified products.

The take home message is to eat a rainbow: a diet full of greens, yellows and reds.

- Eat lots of vegetables.
- Eat whole foods.
- Eat foods that are minimally processed. The more processing, the less likely the foods will have the same vitamin & mineral content.
- Shop the fresh and frozen sections of the grocery store. (Frozen vegetables retain nutrients well.)
- Shop the perimeter of the store; avoid the bakery (although you can now find some fresh gluten-free bread on bakery shelves).
- Seek out fresh or frozen or minimally processed foods, with as few ingredients as possible.
 - » Cook! We've become so fast paced, that we forget how to cook....kids don't really know where food comes from. If you cook your own food you can control fats, add flavor with herbs and spices, and cut down on salt and sugar. And, you can easily make sure that every plate is a rainbow.



Staying healthy on a gluten-free diet also requires ensuring that what you eat is actually gluten-free. Dining out presents special challenges.

Although “gluten-free” options are seen on many more restaurant menus now compared with two years ago, this may actually make staying gluten-free riskier. The restaurant and food service industry have jumped on the gluten-free trend and are eager to promote “gluten-free” items even when they are not necessarily fully prepared to offer truly gluten-free choices. Now some restaurants want to ask “are you celiac or just a little intolerant?” and then make decisions on how they prepare food based on this. They should always prepare gluten-free foods with the same standards, regardless.

So the bottom line is that you need to take responsibility for your choices; ultimately you have to be comfortable with your choices. Ask your questions - if you don't cook and don't know the terminology, watch the food channel, learn what a reduction sauce is, for example, so that you'll know what questions to ask. Make sure that the restaurant staff understands what gluten-free means. It's not important for a restaurant to know if someone has celiac disease or gluten sensitivity; what they do need to know is that a fryer used for gluten-free foods is not also used for gluten-containing items, that utensils and surfaces are not shared. These are the important questions you need to ask. Restaurants do have accountability – they need to be able to keep gluten-free foods safe. They have to think and re-evaluate how they do food handling, e.g. by creating a contaminant free barrier, changing utensils, using separate plates. They also need to know and realize when they can't do gluten-free foods and be up front about letting customers know. The point to always keep in mind is that you as an individual diner need to be comfortable with the restaurant and your specific menu choices.