

Gluten Intolerant by Ann Mulligan, RN

Gluten troubles were once thought to be a problem primarily for those with celiac disease. But recent research indicates that gluten-related disorders extend to a far broader population, and affect far more than the digestive system.

As scientists chip away at the mountain of health problems caused by the modern American diet, a troubling finding is emerging. Gluten, present in our most popular grains, is being linked not only to celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder affecting one out of 100 Americans, but also to non-celiac gluten intolerance, which afflicts many millions more.

If that forecast sounds dire, take heart. There's a lot you can do to dodge the gluten bullet. It starts with understanding what gluten intolerance is, and why it has become such a huge problem for so many.

The word "gluten" is an umbrella term for proteins found inside many grains and seeds, namely wheat, rye, barley, spelt, kamut and triticale. This gluten has sticky properties. The glue-like property makes gluten especially useful to the food industry, which uses it as a binder, filler, shaper, bulking agent, texturizer and stabilizer in its products. Although most of these foodstuffs, especially wheat, are considered a mainstay of the human diet, not everyone can digest them.

For people who digest gluten well, whole grains can, in moderation, be part of a healthy diet, delivering a host of macro- and micronutrients and complex carbohydrates. But for people who are gluten intolerant, even the most wholesome-looking grains can cause discomfort, fatigue, inflammation and disease.

Gluten-Free is everywhere we look these days, and for good reason. The modern, hybridized, hi-gluten wheat of today is not our ancestor's wheat of yesteryear. More than 55 diseases have been linked to gluten, and it's estimated that 99% of the people who have either gluten intolerance or celiac disease are never diagnosed.

It is also estimated that as much as 15% of the US population is gluten intolerant. Some people may not test for gluten intolerance, yet still feel wheat-sensitive.

These following symptoms could be a sign that one has gluten intolerance:

- 1.** Digestive issues such as gas, bloating, diarrhea and even constipation. We see constipation particularly in children after eating gluten.
- 2.** Keratosis Pilaris, (also known as 'chicken skin' or the little bumps on the back of your arms). This tends to be as a result of a fatty acid deficiency and vitamin A deficiency secondary to fat-malabsorption caused by gluten damaging the gut.
- 3.** Fatigue, brain fog or feeling tired after eating a meal that contains gluten.
- 4.** Diagnosis of an autoimmune disease such as Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Ulcerative Colitis, Lupus, Psoriasis, Scleroderma or Multiple Sclerosis.
- 5.** Neurologic symptoms such as dizziness or feeling of being off balance.
- 6.** Hormone imbalances such as PMS, PCOS or unexplained infertility.
- 7.** Migraine headaches.
- 8.** Diagnosis of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or Fibromyalgia. These diagnoses simply indicate no one has pin pointed the cause of the fatigue or pain.

9. Inflammation, swelling or pain in your joints such as fingers, knees or hips.

10. Mood issues such as anxiety, depression, mood swings and ADD.

We have found the single best way to determine if you have an issue with gluten is to do an elimination diet and take it out of your diet for at least 21 days and then reintroduce it. Please note that gluten is a very large protein and it can take months and even years to clear from your system so the longer you can eliminate it from your diet before reintroducing it, the better.

Americans now spend more than \$2 billion a year on gluten-free products, and finding gluten-free goodies is easier than ever. Gluten free grains include rice, quinoa, buckwheat, corn, millet and amaranth. But just because you can stock your pantry with gluten-free pancake mixes, brownies, cookies and breads doesn't mean you should.

You're better off thinking of these products as occasional treats rather than daily staples. That's because gluten-free breads, pastas and crackers are often high in simple carbohydrates, such as potato starch, that rocket through the digestion process and lead to spikes in blood sugar. Such blood-sugar surges damage the body over time, and also contribute to inflammatory conditions.

We encourage people to think in threes: Combine a lean protein with a healthy fat and a serving of non-grain carbohydrates in the form of a vegetable, legume or fruit. For instance, breakfast might be an omelet with spinach and goat cheese. Dinner could be a stir-fry with chicken, broccoli and almonds. That approach can help the gluten intolerant avoid inflammation while maximizing body-healing nutrition.

The best advice that we share with people is that if they feel significantly better off of gluten, or feel worse when they reintroduce it, then gluten is likely a problem for them. In order to get accurate results from this testing method you must eliminate 100% of the gluten from your diet.

Eliminating gluten 100% from your diet means 100%. Even trace amounts of gluten from cross contamination or medications or supplements can be enough to cause an immune reaction in your body. My suggestion is to learn more about gluten and other toxic triggers, practice replacing them with healthier whole foods, and see how much better your health becomes. The good news is that both celiac disease and non-celiac gluten intolerance are 100 percent manageable. Remove the gluten and the body heals itself. We've heard it before, but it is so true: ***nothing tastes as good as being healthy feels.***

For an extensive list of gluten containing sources, energy testing for additional food sensitivities, food replacement options, and to explore a whole body natural approach to health, set up an appointment with Ann Mulligan RN at Mission Oaks Counseling and Wellness Center. You can reach Ann to schedule an appointment with her by going onto mocwc.com.