

The background of the entire page is decorated with several golden wheat stalks. One large stalk is at the top center, another is at the top right, a smaller one is on the left side, and several others are scattered at the bottom and right edges. The text is centered over this background.

GLUTEN FREE

Lifestyle

CHECKLIST

Secrets To Excellent Gut Health

Gluten Free Lifestyle Checklist

You visit the doctor regularly to maintain your health. That's certainly smart. Before your next appointment, however, consider this: when was the last time your doctor asked about your diet? Although physicians are perfectly aware of the connection between our health and the food we put into our body, this is a question they rarely, if ever, pose. They appear to be more interested in prescribing medications than treating and preventing health problems in a more natural and effective way. This is especially disconcerting as more and more people suffer from wheat sensitivity, allergy, or celiac disease. This checklist will run you through the necessary steps to rid your life of gluten and start enjoying each day again.

Chapter 1: Wheat and Celiac Disease – The Downside of Gluten

Wheat has been around for thousands of years. It's easy to grow and quite nutritious. It was probably one of the first food items our forefathers gathered to feed themselves. Wheat was truly life-giving.

For all these thousands of years, the whole grain kernel was ground and used to bake bread or prepare cereals. Fresh, whole grain has always been a part of our diet without being harmful to our health.

It's not until the 1960s and 70s that people began to realize that the wheat they are consuming is making them sick.

Chapter 2: Shopping Gluten-Free

When you begin to shop gluten-free, it can be a bit confusing and overwhelming. You might panic about missing out on your favorite meals. It may seem that there is nothing for you to eat. You'll quickly find, however, that is not the case. You won't miss anything.

Have a Plan

Your trip to the market starts with a list. Walking up and down the aisles can lead to serious temptations. Supermarkets are deliberately designed to tempt you and lure you into buying things you don't need. You don't want to roam randomly. Before you leave the house, before you even create your shopping list, plan your meals.

You at the Supermarket

All supermarkets tend to be laid out in the same way, so it's easy to avoid "dangerous" aisles and sections. When shopping gluten-free, you'll be spending most of your time circling the perimeter of the store, and not the aisles.

Chapter 3: Getting Started with the Gluten-Free Life

If you are thinking about going gluten-free in order to live more healthfully, good for you. It's an excellent decision. If you have been diagnosed as gluten-intolerant, or worse, with celiac disease, you may feel frustrated and overwhelmed. Where on earth do you even start? You have a right to be concerned, because your health is at stake. Going gluten-free is a must for you. It's up to you to make the experience as enjoyable as possible.

A Gluten-Free Kitchen

Once you know what foods to bring into the house (keep in mind fresh is always best), you need to prepare your kitchen in order to avoid cross-contamination.

Cleaning Out the Bathroom

For anyone starting out on the gluten-free life, it may come as a surprise that the kitchen isn't the only room in the house filled with potential dangers.

Your bathroom may be stocked with gluten that can negatively affect your gluten intolerance. Many ordinary cosmetics and hygiene items contain wheat. As a matter of fact, wheat is a favorite exfoliant for the face and body and can be found in any number of lotions and cleansers.

You and Booze

The good news is, you don't have to give up alcohol to enjoy a gluten-free life. You do need to beware of beer, distilled products, and any malt beverages.

You can, however, enjoy bourbon, gin, tequila, rum, cognacs, vodka, and wine.

Gluten and Your Medicine Cabinet

While there is no cure for celiac disease, you may be taking medications for other issues. While you can discuss medications with your doctor, physicians aren't always informed about specific medicines and their ingredients. Your best bet is to talk to the pharmacist and explain your situation. It is always better to be informed and cautious.

Gluten-Free Pantry

When you're eating gluten-free, it's important to have a well-stocked pantry. Otherwise, unexpected guests or coming home hungry and wanting dinner now, or simple, human cravings can have you throwing up your hands in despair. "Fine, we'll order in pizza!"

If you don't want that to happen, you need to be prepared with a well-stocked pantry. You should have all the ingredients for a delicious, gluten-free meal on hand whenever needed.

All of us turn to food for comfort at times. That's fine, as long as the comfort is healthful and nourishing.

Necessary Foods in Your Pantry

In addition to fresh produce and lean meats and fish, there are certain items that should always be on your shelves. You will note that many of them are for seasoning and elevating a dish when cooking.

Chapter 4: Dining Out and Being Social

At times, it might feel as if changing your eating habits to remove gluten from your life is the worst thing that can happen. But then, as you discover a world of healthy alternatives and begin to eat foods you've never even considered, you relax and enjoy all the benefits.

What's For Dinner?

It is rude to tell your host or hostess that you can't eat the lasagna and that they should have something else for you. We repeat: don't expect special accommodations. However, it is perfectly acceptable to simply ask what they are serving.

You've Met Mr. or Ms. Right

Can you date and remain gluten-free? Of course, you can. It can be daunting until you get used to it, but if anyone makes a fuss, he or she deserves to be kicked to the curb, anyway.

Most first dates involve some type of food, so be upfront. Explain that your food options are limited due to health condition. How much you wish to elaborate is up to you.

You're the Host

Probably the best way to socialize and maintain control of your diet is for you to be the host. This will not only alleviate your worries, it's a great opportunity for you to educate your friends and family. When they ask about a dish they enjoy, tell them it is gluten-free.

Finding a Restaurant

We have discussed calling restaurants and asking appropriate questions. Luckily, the number of gluten-free restaurants is on the rise. As for “regular” restaurants, your best bet is one with a large and diverse menu that will always have a simple steak and steamed veggies.

Make Gluten-Free Friends

If you join a gluten-free support group in your area, you will meet new people and make new friends that are in the same position as you. You will be surrounded by an entire group that is supportive and knowledgeable about gluten-free eating. That makes eating out and socializing a worry-free pleasure.

Chapter 5: Avoiding the Pitfalls of Gluten-Free

It's not just people with celiac disease that are opting for a gluten-free diet. According to the Mayo Clinic, 72 percent of people going gluten-free are doing so on the recommendation of a nutritionist or physician. Thankfully, the medical profession is no longer ignoring the fact that “new” processed wheat has nothing to offer us in terms of health and wellbeing and may be doing a variety of harm.

Traveling Gluten-Free

You don't want additional drama while traveling, but how are you supposed to control your diet while on the road? Many people on a gluten-free diet unravel their eating habits due to poor planning. As always, preparation is the key to success.

Chapter 6: Emotional Obstacles to Having Celiac Disease

A diagnosis of celiac disease can seem overwhelming. It's perfectly okay to feel upset. Celiac disease is serious, and it needs to be handled. You will undoubtedly feel shock at the diagnosis. Your first reaction may be denial.

When You Are Tempted to Cheat

Cravings can pop up at any time. They can be difficult to handle, but you are in control. Like an alcoholic, take it one day at a time. You may want that piece of cake more than life itself at this moment. Just get through the moment. Walk away, if possible. Understand that the craving won't be as severe the next day. We repeat: handle cravings one day at a time and remain in control.

You also need to understand what foods trigger your cravings. Is it going to mom's house and having her prepare all of your childhood favorites? Is going out with friends for pizza too difficult to handle?

Taking Control of Your Emotions

Let's not fool ourselves. Knowing you are suffering from celiac disease can cause bouts of blues and depression. When you start feeling down, it's time to elevate your emotions instead of obsessing on food.

Chapter 7: Gluten, ADHD and Autism

ADHD – attention deficit hyperactivity disorder – is on the rise. It is difficult to diagnose (and treat), but as the name implies, it involves the amount of hyperactivity in children. The connection between celiac disease and ADHD is still being studied, but doctors and parents have noticed that both are connected to food allergies and/or food intolerance. Interestingly, around 70 percent of ADHD sufferers have a sensitivity to gluten.

Gluten-Free and Autism

So far, there has been too little research on autism and gluten-free diets. Autism is a disorder of the brain which can make it difficult for a child to communicate and socialize.

Stony Brook University researchers studied 59 children diagnosed with autism and 44 of their non-autistic siblings. The children's family were to record all of their food intake and take stool samples.

The researchers found that almost half of the autistic children, and 30 percent of the non-autistic siblings, suffered from gastrointestinal disorder. These numbers are much higher than found in the general population of children. Since gastrointestinal issues involved the small intestine, researchers have concluded that a gluten-free diet may prove beneficial.

Beware of Chocolate

Kids love chocolate, and you don't want to deprive them. The good news is, you and the kids don't have to give up your favorite sweet on your gluten-free diet. You just have to pick the right chocolate bar. Some are gluten-free, others aren't.

Chapter 8: Adapting Your Diet to Gluten-Free

Once you go gluten-free, you can still enjoy the same dishes you've always loved. As already stated, you aren't giving up anything; you are adding better health to your life. You just need to get creative about preparation techniques. Keep in mind that just about *any* dish can be made gluten-free.

Baking Your Favorite Treats the Gluten-Free Way

We promised at the beginning of this book that you could savor your favorite cookies, pies, and cakes on a gluten-free diet. Using gluten-free flours can be challenging, but it's still possible to create tasty goodies for yourself and your family. Here are some tips for changing your gluten-sweets into gluten-free:

1. When using gluten-free flour, increase the baking powder and baking soda by a quarter. If a standard recipe calls for a teaspoon of baking soda, use a teaspoon and a quarter.
2. Gluten-free flour can crumble. Therefore, making smaller versions of your usual cookies, or baking individual pies instead of one large one, will help keep everything stuck together. When baking breads, bake two mini-loaves instead of a single loaf.
3. Improve the quality and taste of baked goods by combining various types of gluten-free flour instead of using just one kind.
4. Use starches for added texture when you bake. Every recipe can differ, so you need to experiment. A good guide is to use 3 cups of flour to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of starch. Starch can be tapioca, potato starch, or cornstarch. It bears repeating that baking is not a precise science, and you may need to experiment a few times with the ratio for the perfect combination.
5. Gluten is what helps a dough stick together. Without gluten, you need to use something else to keep your dish from falling apart. Use a teaspoon or more of guar gum, gelatin, or xanthan

to keep your breads together. For cakes and muffins, add only half a teaspoon. Adding an extra egg can also help bind the dry ingredients together.

6. Yes, you are likely to make mistakes when you experiment. But you don't have to let everything go to waste. Place those errors in a food processor and create gluten-free coating for your fried meats and fish.
7. To create a more perfect gluten-free dough, beat the batter more than you would ordinary dough to provide it with some structure.
8. Butter is a permitted addition to your gluten-free baking. However, to add extra sweetness, moisture, and nutrition, substitute a portion of the butter called for with a fruit puree. The best fruits to use are apples, avocados, and bananas. They can add a great deal of flavor to baked goods.

Making Good Substitutions in Your Recipes

Get creative when cooking gluten-free and learn how to multi-use your ingredients:

1. Anything that calls for a bun can be wrapped in lettuce or a corn tortilla.
2. You don't have to give up your favorite fried chicken, pork chops, or fish. Just substitute a different coating for the usual breadcrumbs. We have already discussed turning some failed baking attempts into crumbs. You can also turn gluten-free bread into breadcrumbs. Another interesting way to coat is to crumble up pork rinds.
3. Some recipes call for beer. Unless you have a non-malt, gluten-free beer handy, use apple cider instead.
4. To make croutons for your salads, cut up a few slices of gluten-free bread and fry the cubes.
5. When preparing sandwiches, don't limit yourself to gluten-free bread. Get creative and use corn tortillas, waffles, or thin pancakes. Also, try a healthful lettuce wrap.

Mastering gluten-free cooking takes some creativity and experimentation. It's a good idea to try smaller batches until you achieve satisfying results.

Being diagnosed with celiac disease or wheat allergy does not have to interfere with your favorite meals. Play around with the ingredients and enjoy tasty results.