



HOLY FAMILY
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Should You Avoid Gluten?

Bless us O Lord with these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Stroll through any grocery store and the number of products with claims of being “gluten free” might lead you to wonder if it’s a new diet trend. More than 2,500 such products were introduced in the U.S. in 2010 alone, and Americans are expected to spend a total of \$5.5 billion on them by 2015. “There is definitely a health halo hanging over these products,” says Lauren Slayton, M.S., a registered dietician in New York City . Many people seem to think that going gluten free will lead to a smaller waistline and better health. But, will it? Should we limit our intake the way we should watch the amount of sodium and sugar in our daily diet?

Celiac vs. Gluten Intolerant

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, and barley that can be added as a thickening agent to food. It should be avoided by people who suffer from celiac disease – an autoimmune condition that affects slightly more than 1 percent of the U.S. population. It damages the tiny, hairlike protrusions in the small intestine, ultimately impairing the absorption of nutrients.

Without treatment, people with celiac disease are susceptible to anemia and osteoporosis from malnourishment, as well as secondary autoimmune diseases resulting from compromised immunity. People who have unexplained anemia, chronic gastrointestinal symptoms, or first degree relatives with celiac disease should be tested for the disorder, says Pam Cureton, R.D., L,D,N, of the University of Maryland Center for Celiac Research in Baltimore. Eliminating gluten is the only known cure.

But, should everyone avoid foods containing gluten? Only, if you have celiac disease or a doctor determines that you are nonceliac gluten intolerant (NCGI). You shouldn’t start a gluten-free diet without proper testing. You might have celiac disease and not know it. And if you give up gluten, you won’t test positive for the antibodies for the disease, so your celiac disease would be masked. While gluten intolerance can be unpleasant, it’s not harmful to long term health and it isn’t as serious as celiac disease.

Bottom Line, if you suspect you might be gluten intolerant, get a blood test to rule out celiac disease. Even if the results are negative, you might want to cut out foods with gluten one at a time to see if it makes you feel any better. Removing gluten from your diet isn’t easy, since it can show up in some not-so-obvious places. See chart below.

Where Gluten Lurks

Where it is:

- Beer
- Candy
- Cold cuts
- Imitation bacon
- Soy sauce
- Supplements

Where it isn’t:

- Corn chips
- Corn taco shells
- Jams and jellies
- Plain potato chips
- Rice cakes

Borrowed from: Consumer Reports on Health, Food Sense, February 2012. Consultants: Lauren Slayton, M.S., R.D. New York City and Pam Cureton, R.D., L.D.N., Center for Celiac Research, University of Maryland , Baltimore . The information in Consumer Reports on Health should not substitute for professional or medical advice. Readers should always consult a physician or other professional for treatment and advice. For more information, consult www.celiacdisease.com and www.glutenfreefoods.com. May you be blessed with many good and nourishing foods, Your Parish Nurse.

**To contact Holy Family Parish Nurse Ministry call 330-688-6412 ext. 462
or view at www.holyfamilystow.org.**