

NUTRITION SEGMENT SEPTEMBER 17, 2007: WHEN GRAINS DON'T AGREE WITH YOU: A GLIMPSE INTO GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

You may know someone who gets sick when they eat wheat products. People who cannot tolerate the specific grains wheat, barley or rye have gluten intolerance or celiac disease. The basis for their condition stems from the protein in these grains. The protein is gluten. This is a chronic, autoimmune intestinal disorder where the tiny villi of the small intestine become inflamed when gluten is consumed. The small intestine then cannot absorb key nutrients. Living a gluten-free lifestyle requires detailed label reading because even a small amount of gluten can cause harm to the small intestine.

SYMPTOMS:

Some people don't experience any symptoms at all and some experience these symptoms:

- Abdominal pain, bloating, gas, nausea, vomiting, constipation, diarrhea, mouth ulcers, swelling of hands and feet and bone/joint pain.

GLUTEN-CONTAINING FOODS TO AVOID:

Gluten is the protein found in wheat, barley and rye so any item containing those ingredients must be avoided. Oats also need special precautions due to cross-contamination in plant processing.

- All products containing wheat such as any item with the word wheat, bulgur, couscous, durum, graham flour, hydrolyzed wheat protein, kamut, semolina, spelt, triticale.
- All products containing barley such as any item with the word barley, ale, beer, Brewer's Yeast, Lager, malt extract/syrup/flavoring/vinegar.
- All products containing rye such as rye bread and rye flour.
- Commercially available oat products that may be cross-contaminated with wheat or barley. Uncontaminated specialty oat products are available and moderate use may be safe for consumption.

CROSS-CONTAMINATION TO AVOID:

The goal of the gluten-free lifestyle is to avoid gluten at all times. Do not share butter/margarine/jam containers because of left-over bread crumbs. Have a special toaster or use special bags to toast your bread. Even flour used in baking cookies can linger in the air so all family members should use gluten-free flours.

ALTERNATIVE GRAINS THAT ARE GLUTEN-FREE:

People with gluten-intolerance have to avoid the main grain staples like whole wheat bread, pasta, crackers and cereals because their base is whole wheat. Fortunately there are more alternatives available.

- Rice, corn, amaranth grain, millet, and quinoa and pastas made from beans, corn, lentils, peas, potatoes, rice and soy.

FOOD ALLERGY LAW:

To make things easier for people living a gluten-free lifestyle, in January 2006 a new allergy law was put into place which states if a product contains wheat it must declare it on the label. The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 states that any product that contains the eight major allergens, one being wheat, must be declared in plain English on the label. Therefore, ingredients in the past whose origins were unknown, now have to be labeled as wheat.

NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES:

Since wheat products contain so many important nutrients, it's important to take a multivitamin that provides at least 100% of the daily value for the B vitamins. A calcium supplement with Vitamin D is also helpful due to risk of osteoporosis. Take 500 mg twice a day.

For more questions, contact Stacy Beeson @ 381-2403.