



**GLUTEN
INTOLERANCE
GROUP**



Healthy Gluten-Free Eating Guidelines

Updated November 2018

Removing gluten from the diet is the essential first step to thriving gluten-free. Next, learn how to make your gluten-free plate exceptionally healthy.



Vegetables

Fill approximately half your plate with non-starchy vegetables such as broccoli, bell peppers, onions, cabbage, carrots, artichoke, beets, Brussels sprouts, tomato, cauliflower and cucumber. In addition to being naturally gluten-free, vegetables provide fiber, nutrients including folate, niacin, riboflavin, vitamin C, calcium, iron, phosphorus and potassium, and additional phytonutrients, such as anthocyanins, carotenoids, and flavonoids, which may provide added health benefits like antioxidant activity and protection against cancer. Antioxidants help counteract the damaging effects of oxidation, which is a normal end product of cellular function but which, in large amounts, can contribute to chronic disease and cancer.

Whole grains/starches

Fill approximately one quarter of your plate with grains and starchy vegetables (such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, and winter squash). Gluten-free grains include amaranth, quinoa, buckwheat, brown rice, teff, millet and corn. These grains provide many micronutrients, such as manganese, copper, phosphorus, magnesium, riboflavin, folate, zinc, thiamin and niacin, all of which are essential to general health, in addition to supporting immune and brain function, supporting nutrient metabolism, and growing healthy cells. Eating at least half of your grains whole means they contain not only more vitamins and minerals, but also more fiber and protein than their more refined counterparts, which will help keep you full longer and help prevent blood sugar spikes. When blood sugar plummets, you may feel irritable, dizzy, exhausted, weak and anxious, or as some people say, “hangry”. The complex carbohydrates and fiber found in whole grains can keep blood sugars from going too low and causing these symptoms.

Starchy vegetables provide nutrients like phosphorus, carotenoids (an antioxidant form of vitamin A), vitamins C and B6, niacin, thiamin, manganese, biotin, copper, potassium, vitamin K, folate, magnesium, pantothenic acid and riboflavin. Eating starchy vegetables in their natural form provides fiber and energy in the form of carbohydrates.

Protein sources

Fill approximately one quarter of your plate with protein sources. Protein can be found in foods from animal sources (beef, pork, poultry, fish, eggs and dairy) or plant sources (beans, legumes, nuts, seeds and soy). Animal protein provides a very absorbable form of iron, which is necessary for the formation of red blood cells and, as a result, nutrient and oxygen distribution around the body. It also is a good source of zinc (integral for immune function and many cellular reactions) and vitamin B6 (necessary for protein breakdown). Plant proteins provide thiamin, folate, fiber, iron, magnesium, copper, vitamins E and K, copper and potassium. These nutrients are necessary for cellular metabolism, DNA and cell replication, blood cell formation, bone health, natural antioxidant activity and blood clotting.

Healthy Fats

Favor mono- and polyunsaturated fats, which provide anti-inflammatory benefits and contribute to cardiovascular and brain health. They are found in nuts; seeds; salmon and other fatty fish such as mackerel, anchovies, sardines, black cod, rainbow trout and herring; olive oil, and avocados. Fish as a source of healthy fats also provide a fantastic source of vitamin B12, which is integral for DNA and cell replication, as well as for normal brain and nervous system function. Aim for two servings of fish a week to obtain these benefits. Limit saturated fats by cutting back on intake of fatty meats, poultry with skin, and higher fat dairy products.

Fruits

A piece of fruit makes a great gluten-free snack, and is easily portable for on-the-go munching. Fruits provide high amounts of micronutrients, such as vitamin C (an antioxidant) and potassium (necessary for heart function as well as muscle contraction), fiber (good for your digestion and cardiovascular health), as well as other necessary micronutrients. Eat fruit with a protein source (such as peanut butter, a handful of nuts or a slice of cheese) to feel full longer and to prevent blood sugar spikes.

Water and other non-sugar-sweetened beverages

Drinking water throughout the day prevents dehydration and its associated symptoms (headache, dizziness, fatigue, and irritability) and allows for regular cellular and bodily functions such as metabolism and digestion. Aim for drinking about one ounce of water for each kilogram of body weight throughout the day (to find this, divide weight in pounds by 2.2), and limit consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages to avoid extra calories and blood sugar spikes.

Other considerations:

- Gluten-free diets can be high in fat and low in complex carbohydrates and fiber, iron, folate, niacin, thiamin and riboflavin. Additionally, some people with celiac disease may have poor absorption of, and higher needs for, calcium, folate, iron and vitamins A, B12, D, E and K. Various sources of these nutrients have been noted above.
- Consider adding at least 2 tablespoons of fermented foods each day to your meals, such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, miso, kombucha, yogurt, and tempeh.* These types of foods may increase the microbial diversity in the gut, which in turn may reduce inflammation in the gut, support better nutrient absorption, and result in reduced risk of infection and illness.**

(*Be aware that some versions of these foods may contain gluten.

**These benefits may not be seen in everyone, and should not be counted on when ingesting these products.)

- Select organic, free-range or grass-fed animal proteins when possible. Organic foods may contain more nutrients and less pesticides than conventional foods, and organic growing practices may be safer for the environment. If eating all organic is not feasible, consider visiting the Environmental Working Group's Dirty Dozen website (https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/dirty_dozen_list.php#.Wh9bZLT80Wo) to check which fruits and vegetables have the highest amount of pesticides. Meat from free-range and grass-fed animals generally have lower amounts of saturated fat and more polyunsaturated fat as well as less E. coli and salmonella bacteria when compared to conventionally-raised animals.

Note: Be aware of risk of gluten cross-contamination! Buy only gluten-free certified oats and avoid buying anything (grains, nuts, seeds, legumes, beans, etc.) from bulk bins.

References:

- Nutrient Deficiencies. GIG Web site. www.gluten.org/resources/diet-nutrition/nutrient-deficiencies/ Published October 2017.
- Why Go Organic, Grass-Fed and Pasture-Raised? Environmental Working Group Web site. www.ewg.org/meateatersguide/a-meat-eaters-guide-to-climate-change-health-what-you-eat-matters/why-go-organic-grass-fed-and-pasture-raised/ Published 2011.
- World's Healthiest Foods Web site. <http://whfoods.org/> Updated 2017.

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Other helpful information is available at www.GLUTEN.org.

Advances in celiac disease are fast-paced. If this document is more than 2 years old, please visit our website for updated documents.

This information should not be used to diagnose or treat gluten-related disorders or other medical conditions. For questions about these conditions consult your healthcare team when considering this information.

Please consider your local GIG support group as another resource.

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The Mission of the Gluten Intolerance Group is to empower the gluten-free community through consumer support, advocacy, and education.

To make a donation or become a volunteer to GIG, visit our website or call the office at 253-833-6655.

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This article has been assessed and approved by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.