

10 Reasons to Avoid Grains and Go Gluten Free



Gluten free is more than just a diet trend. Most people have some level of gluten intolerance and excess gluten can damage the villi (the absorptive surface) of the small intestine leading to poor nutrient absorption and even other serious health conditions including coeliac's disease, infertility, auto-immune problems and more.

Gluten is part of the elastic, rubbery protein found in wheat, spelt, rye, barley, triticale, burghul and kamut. Gluten is binding, so used in baking to prevent crumbling. It can be found in breads, cakes, pastries, cookies, biscuits, crackers, battered foods, cereals, snack foods, pastas and pizza. Because gluten is also used as a thickener and filler it is found in soups, gravies, sauces, processed meats, pickles, sweets, instant pudding and chocolate.

To help your journey into going gluten free, the key is to find new foods and recipes to replace those grain and gluten containing ones you no longer will use, and discovering how delicious they can be along the way!

10 good reasons to avoid grains and go gluten free:

1. Grains (gluten containing or otherwise) are usually high glycaemic and cause blood sugar irregularities being a real problem for people with diabetes, hypoglycaemia, poly cystic ovarian syndrome and insulin resistance;
2. Gluten is highly allergenic meaning the body will behave like it's under attack and this may mean serious digestive disturbances, allergic reactions and more;
3. Gluten is highly inflammatory which can lead to skin flare ups including eczema and psoriasis;
4. Joint inflammation leading to increased body pain and exacerbated back problems;
5. Gluten has been shown to decrease a woman's ability to ovulate
6. Gluten has been linked to decreased couple fertility
7. Grains have high levels of phytates which also decrease nutrient absorption in the body; and can be an underlying cause of anaemia for some people.
8. Eating grains makes you crave grains and sugar since grains break down into sugar, they create a rise in insulin levels when those levels fall you crave more grains and, thus, the vicious cycle continues;
9. Avoiding gluten has been shown to improve mental health decreasing the symptoms of depression, schizophrenia and autism
10. Improve your energy levels! Gluten has also been shown to have a negative impact on energy levels—avoidance is the best policy!

There are loads of great *gluten free* recipes and cookbooks out in the market these days. Just find one that suits your food preferences.

Gluten Free Grains:

Amaranth:

High in protein, calcium, fibre, magnesium, silicon, iron and vitamin C. It contains more calcium than milk. Can be used in breads, cakes and grain dishes. Pop like pop-corn or toast for a nutty flavour. Sprout and use in salads.

Buckwheat:

High in bioflavonoid “rutin” that helps strengthen blood vessels, and also high in protein. You can sprout it, and the flour can be used for pancakes and other baked goods.

Corn:

Its high-fibre content helps intestinal activity, and its flour can be made into corn bread or tortillas.

Millet:

Also known as Sorghum. An alkalising grain that balances over-acid conditions. High protein profile and useful for diarrhoea, vomiting and indigestion.

Quinoa:

Pronounced “Keen Wa”. Rinse thoroughly before cooking as it has a soap-like coating. It has the highest protein content compared to other grains, and is a nutrient-concentrated food.

Rice:

Is hypo-allergenic, and whole brown rice is a concentrated source of B vitamins. Avoid white rice as it is refined and lacking many nutrients. Wild Rice (not an actual rice) has twice as much protein as normal rice.

Flour Alternatives:

- Amaranth
- Besan (chick pea)
- Buckwheat
- Corn Flour (Maize)
- Polenta
- Potato
- Rice
- Soy

Foods to avoid:

Read all labels carefully. Food should be avoided if its ingredients list contains any of the following:

- Wheat, rye, barley, triticale, oats, spelt, kamut, durum, bulgar
- Semolina
- Farina or thickeners (unspecified)
- Wheatstarch, starch (unspecified)
- Bread, biscuits, batter, crumbs, cereals (unspecified)
- Cornflour (unspecified or wheat-based)
- Malt

Small traces of gluten may be found in any of the following, and should also be avoided:

- Food starch, edible starch and modified starch
- Additive numbers 1400-1450 (unspecified)
- Malt flavouring, malt extract, malted milk
- Maltodextrin (of wheat origin or unspecified)
- Hydrolysed vegetable or plant protein (unspecified or of wheat origin)
- Stabilisers (unspecified). GF stabilisers include agar agar, alginates, guar gum, xanthan gum, pectin, gelatine.
- Anti-caking agents and free flowing agents (unspecified)
- Icing sugar mixture (pure icing sugar is GF)
- Baking powder (may contain wheaten flour). Must be labelled GF.
- Soy sauce (some brands are GF)
- Worcestershire Sauce
- Brown vinegar made from malt (wine and cider vinegars are GF)
- Glucose and glucose syrup (manufacturing process should render it GF, but use with caution).
- Sweeteners are GF, but powdered forms may contain a starch filler.
- MSG

Wine and fortified wines are GF. Caution is recommended with others.

Some prescription and non-prescription medications also contain gluten. Check with doctor or chemist.

Gluten Free Olive Oil Pastry Dough

A wonderful base for your pies and pastries... minus the gluten! Makes: 1 serving

Ingredients:

- 1 cup whole bean flour
- ½ cup rice flour or tapioca flour
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil (or preferably coconut oil), frozen
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ cup ice water

Method of Preparation:

Measure flours into the bowl of a food processor, pulsing to sift. Add the salt and frozen olive oil or coconut oil. Combine until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. With the motor running, add the water 1 tablespoon at a time. Stop when about half the water has been added to begin checking the consistency of the dough by pinching the crumbs. The dough should hold together but not be sticky. Add the remaining water as necessary.

Bring the dough together into a ball, and then flatten it into a disk. Wrap in waxed baking paper and refrigerate for a minimum of 15 minutes. Pre-heat the oven to 180°C. If making a pie case, roll the chilled dough to about 0.5cm thick to fit a 25cm tart pan. Fit the dough in the pan and dock the dough with a fork. Line the dough with a circle of parchment or baking paper. Add dried beans or pastry weights. Blind bake for 12 minutes and allow cooling in the oven slightly before removing.

Life Changing Loaf of Bread

Ingredients:

1 cup / 135g sunflower seeds
½ cup / 90g flax seeds
½ cup / 65g hazelnuts or almonds
1 ½ cups / 145g rolled oats
2 Tbsp. chia seeds
4 Tbsp. psyllium seed husks (3 Tbsp. if using psyllium husk powder)
1 tsp. fine grain sea salt (add ½ tsp. if using coarse salt)
1 Tbsp. maple syrup (for sugar-free diets, use a pinch of stevia)
3 Tbsp. melted coconut oil or ghee
1 ½ cups / 350ml water



Directions:

1. In a flexible, silicon loaf pan combine all dry ingredients, stirring well. Whisk maple syrup, oil and water together in a measuring cup. Add this to the dry ingredients and mix very well until everything is completely soaked and dough becomes very thick (if the dough is too thick to stir, add one or two teaspoons of water until the dough is manageable). Smooth out the top with the back of a spoon. Let sit out on the counter for at least 2 hours, or all day or overnight. To ensure the dough is ready, it should retain its shape even when you pull the sides of the loaf pan away from it.
2. Preheat oven to 175°C
3. Place loaf pan in the oven on the middle rack, and bake for 20 minutes. Remove bread from loaf pan, place it upside down directly on the rack and bake for another 30-40 minutes. Bread is done when it sounds hollow when tapped. Let cool completely before slicing (difficult, but important).
4. Store bread in a tightly sealed container for up to five days. Freezes well too – slice before freezing for quick and easy toast!